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THE ORANGE GIRL

PROLOGUE.

On a certain afternoon in May, about four or five of the clock, I was standing at the open window of my room in that Palace to which Fortune leads her choicest favourites —the College, or Prison, as some call it, of the King's Bench. I was at the time a prisoner for debt, with very little chance of ever getting out. More fortunate than most of the tenants, I was able to carry on my business. For instance, all that morning I had been engaged in composing a song—it was afterwards sung with great applause at the Dog and Duck; and on the bed reposed the instrument with which I earned the greater part of my daily bread—my faithful violin.

My window was on the ground-floor in the great building, which was then new, for the Prison had been transferred from the other side two or three years before. This building contains more than two hundred rooms, and twice that number of prisoners. Many of the ground-floor rooms have been converted into shops—chandlers', grocers', mercers', hosiers'. You may buy anything in these shops, except a good book. I believe that there is no demand in the prison for such an article of commerce.

Song-books and jest-books and cards, on the other hand, are constantly called for. It was a day of bright sunshine. Outside, on the Grand Parade—otherwise called King Street—which is a broad footway flagged, strolled up and down in the sunshine an endless procession. They paced the pavement from East to West: they turned and paced it again from West to East. Among them were a few neatly attired, but by far the greater number, men and women, were slatternly, untidy, and slipshod. Their walk—nobody was ever seen to walk briskly in the Prison—was the characteristic shuffle easily acquired in this place: the men were mostly in slippers: some were in morning gowns: very few had their heads dressed: some wore old-fashioned wigs, rusty and uncombed: some, the poorer sort, were barefooted, and in such rags and tatters as would not be tolerated in the open streets. The faces of the people as they passed were various. There was the humorous face of the prisoner who takes fortune philosophically: there was the face always resentful: the face resigned: the face vacuous: the face of suffering: the face sodden with drink: the face vicious: the face soured: the face saddened: the face, like the clothes, ragged and ruined: everything but the face happy—that cannot be found in the King's Bench Prison. Children ran about playing and shouting: there were at this time many hundreds of children in the prison. Against the wall—'tis surely twenty-five feet higher than is needed—the racquet and fives players carried on their games: at the lower end of the Parade some played the game called Bumble Puppy: here and there tables were set where men drank and smoked pipes of tobacco and played cards, though as yet it was only afternoon. The people talked as they went along, but not with animation: now and then one laughed; but the merriment of the College is very

near the fount of tears; it hath a sound hysterical. Some conversed eagerly with visitors: by their eagerness you knew that they were new-comers. What did they talk about? The means of release? Yet so few do get out. For the first three or four years of imprisonment, when visitors call, prisoners talk of nothing else. After that time, visitors cease to call: and there is no more talk of release. A man in the King's Bench is speedily forgotten. He becomes dead to the world: dead and forgotten. Surely there is no more pitiless and relentless enemy than a creditor. Yet in church every Sunday he asks, and expects, that mercy from his God which he himself refuses to his debtor.

On no other day in the year could the Prison look more cheerful. Yet as I stood at the window there fell upon me such a sadness as belongs only to the Prison; it is a longing to be free: a yearning inconceivable for the green fields and the trees. Such moods are common in the Prison. I have seen men turn aside from their friends in the midst of a song, in the height of the revelry, and slink away from the company with drooping head and bowed shoulders. It is indeed difficult not to feel this sadness from time to time. I was young: I had few friends, for a reason that I shall tell you presently. For aught that I could see there was nothing before me but a lifelong imprisonment. Nobody, I say, can understand the strength and the misery of this yearning for liberty—for air—that sometimes seizes the prisoner and rends him and will not let him go. Yet I was better off than many, because, though I could in no way pay the money for which I was imprisoned, I was not without the means of a livelihood. I had, as I have said, my fiddle. So long as a man has a fiddle and can play it he need never want. To play the fiddle is the safest of all trades, because the

fiddler is always wanted. If a company is drinking they will call for the fiddler to lift up their hearts: if there are girls with them they will call for the fiddler to make them dance: if they would sing they want the fiddler to lead them off: if they are sitting in the coffee-room they call for the fiddler to enliven them. Grave discourse or gay; young people or old: they are always ready to call for the fiddler and to pay him for his trouble. So that by dint of playing every evening, I did very well, and could afford to dine at the two shilling ordinary and to drink every day a glass or two of ale, and to pay my brother-in-law for the maintenance of Alice and the boy.

Among the prisoners were two who always walked together: talked together: and drank together. The others looked askance upon them. One, who was called the Captain, wore a scarlet coat which might have been newer, and a gold-laced hat which had once been finer. He was a tall, burly fellow, with the kind of comeliness one may see in a horse-rider at a fair, or a fellow who performs on a tight-rope; a man who carries by storm the hearts of village girls and leaves them all forlorn. He swaggered as he walked, and looked about him with an insolence which made me, among others, desirous of tweaking him by the nose, if only to see whether his courage was equal to his swagger. I have always, since, regretted that I lost the opportunity. Duels are not allowed in the College, and perhaps in an encounter with the simpler weapons provided by Nature I might have been equal to the Captain. His manners at the Ordinary were noisy, and, if he had ever really carried His Majesty's Commission, as to which there were whispers, it must have been in some branch of the service where the urbanities of life are not required. Further: it was known that he was always ready to play with anyone: and at any time

of the day: it was reported that he always won: this reputation, coupled with his insolent carriage, caused him to be shunned and suspected.

His companion, commonly known as the Bishop, was dressed in the habit of a clergyman. He wore a frayed silk cassock and a gown with dirty bands. His wig, which wanted dressing, was canonical. His age might have been forty or more: his cheeks were red with strong drink: his neck was puffed: his figure was square and corpulent: his voice was thick: he looked in a word what he was, not a servant of the Lord at all, but of the Devil.

At this period I had little experience or knowledge of the people who live by rogueries and cheats: nor had I any suspicion when a stranger appeared that he was not always what he pretended to be. At the same time one could not believe that the hulking fellow in a scarlet coat had ever received a commission from the King: nor could anyone believe that the hoglike creature who wore a cassock and a gown and a clergyman's wig was really in Holy Orders.

Among the collegians there was one who pleased me, though his raiment was shabby to the last degree, by his manners, which were singularly gentle; and his language, which was that of a scholar. He scorned the vulgar idiom and turned with disgust from the universal verb (or participle) with which annoyance or dislike or disappointment was commonly expressed. And he spoke in measured terms as one who pronounces a judgment. I heard afterwards that he wrote critical papers on new books in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. But I never read new books unless they are books of music. When he could afford to dine at the Ordinary, which was about twice a week, he sat beside me and instructed me by his discourse. He was a scholar of some college at Cambridge and a poet. I sometimes think that it may be a loss to the world not to know its

poets. There are without doubt some who regard poetry as musicians regard music. Now if the work of a Purcell or a Handel were to fall dead and unnoticed it would be a most dreadful loss to music and a discouragement for composers. So that there may be poets, of whom the world hears nothing, whose verse is neglected and lost, though it might be of great service to other poets or to mankind, if verse can in any way help the world.

However, one day, when these two prisoners, the Captain and the Bishop, had left the Ordinary and were bawling in the tavern hard by for a bottle of Port, my friend the scholar turned to me.

'Sir,' he said, 'the Prison ought to be purged of such residents. They should be sent to the Borough Compter or the Clink. Here we have gentlemen: here we have tradesmen: here we have craftsmen: we are a little World. Here are the temptations of the world': he looked across the table where some of the ladies of the Prison were dining. 'The tavern invites us: the gaming table offers us a seat: we have our virtues and our vices. But we have not our crimes. And as a rule we cannot boast among our company the presence of the Robber, the Forger, or the Common Rogue. We have, in a word, no representative, as a rule, of the Gallows, the Pillory, the Stocks, the Cart-tail, and the Whipping Post.'

I waited, for he did not like to be interrupted.

'Sir,' he went on, 'I am a Poet. As a child of the Muses'—I thought they were unmarried but did not venture on that objection—'it is my business to observe the crooked ways of men and the artful ways of women, even though one may at times be misunderstood—as has once or twice happened. One may be the temporary companion of a Rogue without having to pick a pocket. I remember the faces of those two men—I saw them in a

'Thieves' Kitchen whither I was taken in disguise by one who knows them. The Captain, Sir, is a Highwayman, common and notorious. He is now five-and-twenty, and his rope is certainly long out, so that he is kept from Tyburn Tree by some special favour by Mr. Merridew the Thief Taker. The other, whom they call the Bishop, is a Rogue of some education. He may last longer because he is useful and it would be hard to replace him. He was once usher in a suburban school at Marybone, and now writes lying, threatening or begging letters for the crew. He also concocts villainies. He threatens to set the house on fire, or to bring the householder into bankruptcy: or in some way to injure him fatally unless he sends a certain sum of money. He tells gentlemen who have been robbed that they can have their papers back, but not their money, by sending a reward. His villainy is without any pity or mercy or consideration. The Captain is a mere robber—a Barabbas. The Bishop is worse: he has the soul of a Fiend in the body of a man.'

'But why,' I said, 'are they here?'

'They are in hiding. A sham debt has been sworn against them. From their dejected faces and from what I have overheard them saying, I learn that a true debt has been added for another detainer. But indeed I know not their affairs, except that they came here in order to be out of the way, and that something has happened to disconcert their plans. As honest men we must agree in hoping that their plans, which are certainly dishonest, may succeed, in order that their presence among us may cease and so we may breathe again. The air of the Prison is sometimes close and even musty, but we do not desire it to be mistaken for the reek of St. Giles's or the stench of Turnmill Street.'

However, I troubled myself but little as to these two men. And I know not how long they were in the prison.

Had I known what they would do for me in the future I think I should have brained them there and then.

This afternoon this pair were talking together with none of the listlessness that belongs to the King's Bench. 'Might as well get out at once'—I heard fragments—'quite certain that he won't appear—no more danger—if she will consent,' and so on—phrases to which I paid no attention.

Suddenly, however, they stopped short, and both cried out together:

'She's come herself!'

I looked out of my window and beheld a Vision.

The lady was alone. She stood at the end of the Parade and looked about her for a moment with hesitation, because the scene was new to her. She saw the ragged rout playing racquets: drinking at their tables: leaning against the pumps, at each of which there is always a little gathering: or strolling by in couples on the Parade. Then she advanced slowly, looking to the right and to the left. She smiled upon the people as they made way for her: no Queen could have smiled more graciously: yet not a Queen, for there was no majesty in her face, which was inspired by, and filled with, Venus herself, the Goddess of charm and grace and loveliness. Never was a face more lovely and more full of love. As for her dress, all that I can tell you is that I have never known at any time how this lady was dressed: she carried, I remember, an ivory-handled fan in her hand: she seemed to beholders to be dressed in nothing but lace, ribbons and embroidery. Her figure was neither tall nor short. Reasonably tall, for a woman ought not to be six feet high: so tall as not to be insignificant: not so tall as to dwarf the men: slender in shape and quick and active in her movements. Her eyes, which I observed later, changed every moment with her change of mood: one

would say that they even changed their colour, which was a dark blue: they could be limpid, or melting, or fiery, or pitiful; in a word, they could express every fleeting emotion. Her features changed as much as her eyes: one never knew how she would look, until one had watched and known her in all her moods and passions: her lips were always ready to smile: her face was continually lit up by the sunshine of joy and happiness. But this woman wanted joy as some women want love. Her voice was gentle and musical.

I speak of her as I knew her afterwards, not as she appeared on this, the first day of meeting. I make no excuse for thus speaking of her, because, in truth, the very thought of Jenny—I have too soon revealed her name—makes me long to speak of what she was. Out of the fulness of my heart I write about her. And as you will understand presently, I could love her without wronging my wife, and as much as a woman can be loved, and yet in innocence and with the full approval of the other woman whom also I loved.

At the sight of this apparition the whole Prison stared with open mouth. Who was this angel, and for what fortunate prisoner did she come? At the very outset, when I could not dream that she would ever condescend to speak to me, she seemed the most lovely woman I had ever beheld. Some women might possess more regular features: no one, sure, was ever so lovely, so bewitching, so attractive. It is as if I could go on for ever repeating my words. The women of the Prison—poor tattered drabs, for the most part—looked after her with sighs—oh! to dress like that! Some of them murmured impudently to each other, 'Who gave her all that finery?' Most of them only looked and longed and sighed. Oh! to be dressed like her! To look like her! To smile like

her! To put on that embroidered petticoat—that frock—those gloves—to carry that fan—to possess that figure—that manner! Well: to gaze upon the inaccessible may sometimes do us good. The sight of this Wonder made those poor women appear a little less slatternly. They straightened themselves: they tidied their hair: the more ragged crept away.

As for the men, they followed her with looks of wonder and of worship. For my own part I understood for the first time that power of beauty which compels admiration, worship, and service: when I am greatly moved by music that memory comes back to me. In looking upon such a woman, one asks not what has been her history: what she is: what she has done: one accepts the heavenly cheerfulness of her smile: the heavenly wisdom seated on her brow: the heavenly innocence in her eyes: the purity which cannot be smirched or soiled by contact with things of the world.

I continued to gaze upon her while she walked up the Parade. To my surprise this angelic creature stopped before the pair of worthies—the bully in scarlet and the drunken divine. What could she want with them? They received her with profound salutations, the Bishop sweeping the ground with his greasy hat.

'Madam,' he said, 'we did not expect that you would yourself condescend to such a place.'

'I wished to see you,' she replied curtly. I seemed to remember her voice.

'May we conduct you, Madam,' said the Captain, 'to the Coffee-room for more private conversation? Perhaps a glass——'

'Or,' said the Bishop, for she refused the proffered glass with an impatient gesture — could such a woman drink with such men? she refused, I say, with a shake of

her head, 'for greater privacy to our own room. It is on the third floor. No one will venture to intrude upon us—and there is a chair. I fear that, in the neglect which is too common in this place, the beds are not yet made.' He looked as if the morning wash had not been performed either.

'What do I care, sir,' she asked, interrupting again, 'whether your beds are made or not? I shall stay here.' She withdrew a little nearer to the wall beside my window, so as to be outside the throng of the people. 'We can talk, I suppose, undisturbed, and unheard, though, so far as I care, all the world may hear. Bless me! The people look as if a woman was a rare object here.' She looked round at the crowd. 'Yet there are women among your prisoners. Well, then, what have you got to say? Speak up, and quickly, because I like not the place or the company. You wrote to me. Now go on.'

'I wrote to you,' said the Bishop, 'asking a great favour. I know that we have no reason to expect that or any other favour from you.'

'You have no reason. But go on.'

'We came here, you know'—his voice dropped to a whisper, but I heard what he said—'in order to escape a great danger.'

'I heard. You told me. The danger was in connection with a gentleman and a post-chaise.'

'A villainous charge,' said the Captain.

'Villainous indeed,' repeated the Bishop. 'I could prove to you in five minutes and quite to your satisfaction that the Captain was engaged at Newmarket on the day in question, while I myself was conducting a funeral in place of the Vicar in a country village thirty miles on the other side of London.'

'An excellent defence, truly. But I will leave that to

the lawyers. Well, the debt was sworn against you by Mr. Merridew.' I pricked up my ears at this, because this was the name of the man, as you shall hear, who swore a debt which never existed against me. Could there be two Merridews?

'That was a mere form. Unfortunately other detainers are out against both of us. I know not how they found out that we were here. Mr. Merridew refuses to take us out. He says that he thinks our time is up, and so he knows that we are safe.' He shuddered. Afterwards I understood why. 'There is the danger that we may have to remain here till he takes us out. As for our present necessities——' He drew out his purse and dangled it—a long purse with a very few guineas in it. 'You see, Madam, to stay here, where there is no opportunity of honest work, is ruin and starvation.'

'Honest work! Why, if you go out, you will only continue in your old courses.'

'They are at least honest and even pious courses,' said the Bishop with a snuffle.

'As you please. But there is still the former danger.'

'No. The gentleman understands now that he only mislaid his pocket-pook. Mr. Merridew found it for him. The drafts and notes were still in it, fortunately. The gentleman has redeemed the papers from Mr. Merridew. He will not take any further steps.'

'If I take you out,' she spoke to the Captain, 'you know what will happen. Better stay here in safety.'

'What else can a man do?' asked the Captain.

'You might go abroad; go to America—anything is better than the Road and the certain end.' She made a gesture with her hand, easy to be understood.

'If a man has a long rope, what else can he expect?'

'And you?' she turned to the Bishop, 'what will

become of you? Will you stay in London, where you are known in every street?'

'I have had thoughts of trying Ireland. A good many things can be done in Ireland. The Irish are a confiding people.'

'Do what you please. It is nothing to me what becomes of both of you. I interfere because—oh! you know why. And as for your future—that, I suppose, will be arranged for you by your friend Mr. Merridew.'

Putting together what my friend the starveling poet told me and what they themselves confessed, they were clearly a pair of rogues, and she knew it, and she was going to help them. Charity covereth a multitude of sins. Yet, surely, it was remarkable that a gentlewoman should come to the King's Bench Prison in order to send two abominable criminals back to their old haunts.

'Any place is better than this,' said the Captain.

'Much better than this,' echoed the Bishop. 'Give me freedom while I live. A short life'—but he was certainly past forty—'and a free life, for me.'

'How much is it, then, altogether, for the pair of you?'

'The detainers, not counting Mr. Merridew's, amount to close upon seventy pounds. Then there are the costs and the fees.'

'Oh!' she cried impatiently, 'what is the good of setting you loose again? Why should I let loose upon the world such a pair of rogues? Why not keep you here so that you may at least die in your beds?'

The Bishop looked astonished at this outburst. 'Why,' he said slowly, 'we are what we are. That is true. What else can we be? Nobody knows better than you what we are. Come, now, nobody, I say, knows better than you what we are.'

'Yes,' she replied, with a sigh. 'I do know very well —I wish I did not.'

'By his desire! Yes—I know something of your cousin, sir. It is by his desire? I discover new virtues in your cousin the more I learn of him. I suppose, then, that you are not on friendly terms with your cousin?'

'I am not, indeed. Quite the contrary.'

'Can you tell me the reason why?'

'Because he desires my death. Therefore he has caused my arrest—he and an attorney of the devil, named Probus.'

'Oh! Probus! I have heard of that Probus. Sir, I would willingly hear more concerning this matter and your cousin and Mr. Probus, if you will kindly tell me. I must now go, but with your permission I will come again. It is not, I assure you, out of idle curiosity that I ask these questions.'

The next day, or the day after, the Captain and the Bishop walked out of the Prison. When they were gone open talk went round the Prison, perhaps started by the Poet, that one was a highwayman and the other a sharper—perhaps a forger—a contriver of plots and plans to deceive the unwary. I marvelled that they should have received the bounty of so fine a lady, for indeed, whether highwayman or sharper or honest men, they were as foul-mouthed a pair of reprobates—drunken withal—as we had in the Prison.

And then I remembered, suddenly, the reason why I recognised the lady's voice and why there was something in the face also that I seemed to know. I had been but once in my life to the Theatre. On that occasion there was an actress whose beauty and vivacity gave me the greatest possible delight. One may perhaps forget the face of an actress playing a part, because she alters her face with every part: but her voice, when it is a sweet voice, one remembers. The lady was that actress. I remembered her—and her name. She was Miss Jenny Wilmot of Drury Lane.

PART I.

HOW I GOT INTO THE KING'S BENCH.

CHAPTER I.

I AM TURNED OUT INTO THE WORLD.

In the year 1760 or thereabouts, everybody knew the name of Sir Peter Halliday, Merchant. The House in which Sir Peter was the Senior Partner possessed a fleet of West Indiamen which traded between the Port of London and Jamaica, Barbadoes, and the other English Islands, taking out all kinds of stuffs, weapons, implements, clothing, wine, silks, gloves, and everything else that the planters could want, and returning laden with sugar in bags, mahogany, arrack, and whatever else the islands produce. Our wharf was that which stands next to the Tower stairs: the counting-house was on the wharf: there the clerks worked daily from seven in the morning till eight at night. As a boy it was my delight to go on board the ships when they arrived. There I ran up and down the companion: into the dark lower deck where the midshipmen messed and slept among the flying cockroaches which buzzed into their faces and the rats which ran over them and the creatures which infest a ship in hot latitudes and come on board with the gunny-bags, such as centipedes, scorpions, and great spiders. And I would stand and watch the barges

when they came alongside to receive the cargo. Then with a yeo-heave-oh! and a chantey of the sailors, mostly meaningless, yet pleasant to hear, they tossed the bags of sugar into the barge as if they were loaves of bread, and the casks of rum as if they had been pint pots. Or I would talk to the sailors and hear stories of maroon niggers and how the planters engaged the sailors to go ashore in search of these fierce runaways and shoot them down in the mountains: and stories of shark and barracoota: of hurricanos and islands where men had been put ashore to starve and die miserably: of pirates, of whom there have always been plenty in the Caribbean Sea since that ocean was first discovered. Strange things these sailors brought home with them: coral, pink and white: preserved flying-fish: creatures put in spirits: carved cocoanuts: everybody knows the treasures of the sailor arrived in port.

This, I say, was my delight as a boy: thus I learned to think of things outside the narrow bounds of the counting-house and the City walls. Marvellous it is to mark how, while the Pool is crammed with ships from all parts of the world, the Londoner will go on in ignorance of any world beyond the walls of the City or the boundaries of his parish. Therefore, I say, it was better for me than the study of Moll's Geography to converse with these sailors and to listen to their adventures.

Another thing they taught me. It is well known that on board every ship there is one, at least, who can play the fiddle. A ship without a fiddler is robbed of the sailors' chief joy. Now, ever since I remember anything I was always making music: out of the whistle-pipe: the twanging Jews'-harp: the comb and paper: but above all out of the fiddle. I had a fiddle: I found it in a garret of our house in Great College Street. I made a sailor tell me how to practise upon it: whenever one of our ships

put into port I made friends with the fiddler on board and got more lessons; so that I was under instruction, in this rude manner, for the greater part of the year, and before I was twelve I could play anything readily and after the fashion, rough and vigorous, of the sailors, with whom strength of arm reckons before style.

I belong to a family which for nearly two hundred years has been Puritan. Some of its members were preachers and divines under Cromwell. Their descendants retained the strict observance of those opinions which forbid mirth and merriment, even among young people. Although they conformed to the Church of England, they held that music of all kinds: the theatre: dancing at the Assembly: reading poetry and tales: and wearing of fine dress must be sinful, because they call attention from the salvation of the soul, the only thing about which the sinner ought to think. Why it was worse to let the mind dwell upon music than upon money-getting I know not, nor have I ever been able to discover. It will be understood, however, that ours was a strict household. It consisted of my father, myself, a housekeeper and five servants, all godly. We had long prayers, morning and evening; we attended the Church of St. Stephen Walbrook, instead of our own parish church of St. Michael Paternoster, because there was no organ in it: we went to church on Sundays twice: and twice in the week to the Gift Lectures, of which there were two. My father was a stern man, of great dignity. When he was Lord Mayor he was greatly feared by malefactors. He was of a full habit of body, with a large red face, his neck swollen into rolls. Like all merchants in his position he drank a great deal of port, of which he possessed a noble cellar.

I have often wondered why it was never discovered that I practised the fiddle in the garret. To be sure, it was

only at those hours when my father was on the wharf. When I had the door shut and the windows open the maids below thought, I suppose, that the sounds came from the next house. However that may be, I was never found out.

Now this fondness for music produced an unfortunate result. The sight of a book of arithmetic always filled me with a disgust unspeakable. The sight of a book of accounts inspired me with loathing. The daily aspect of my father's clerks all sitting in a row on high stools, and all driving the quill with heads bending over the paper, made me, even as a child, believe theirs to be the most miserable lot that Fortune has to offer her most unhappy victims. I still think so. Give me any other kind of life: make me a bargee: a coal-heaver: a sailor before the mast: an apothecary: a schoolmaster's usher: in all these occupations there will be something to redeem the position: but for the accountant there is nothing. All day long he sits within four walls: his pay is miserable: his food is insufficient: when in the evening he crawls away, there is only time left for him to take a little supper and go to his miserable bed.

Imagine, therefore, my loathing when I understood that at the age of sixteen I was to take my place among these unfortunates, and to work my way towards the succession which awaited me—the partnership held by my father—by becoming a clerk like unto these others whom I had always pitied and generally despised. From that lot, however, there was no escape. All the partners, from father to son, had so worked their way. The reason of this rule was that the young men in this way acquired a knowledge of the business in all its branches before they were called upon to direct its enterprise, and to enter upon new ventures. I dare say that it was a good practical rule. But in my own case I found it almost intolerable.

I was unlike the clerks in one or two respects: I had good food and plenty of it. And I received no salary.

I had a cousin, named Matthew, son of my father's younger brother and partner, Alderman Paul Halliday, Citizen and Loriner, who had not yet passed the chair. Matthew, though his father was the younger son, was three or four years older than myself. He, therefore, mounted the clerks' stool so many years before me. He was a young man with a face and carriage serious, and thoughtful (to all appearance) beyond his years. He had a trick of dropping his eyes while he talked: his face was always pale and his hands were always clammy. Other young men who had been at school with him spoke of him with disrespect and even hatred, but I know not why. In a word, Matthew had no friends among those of his own age. On the other hand, the older people thought highly of him. My father spoke with praise of his capacity for business and of his industry, and of the grasp of detail which he had already begun to show. As for me, I could never like my cousin, and what happened when I was about eighteen years of age gave me no reason to like him any better.

I had been in the counting-house for two years, each day feeling like a week for duration. But the question of rebellion had so far never occurred to me. I could no longer practise in the garret while my father was in the counting-house. But I could get away, on pretence of business, to the ships and snatch an hour down below with the fiddler. And in the evening sometimes, when my father was feasting with a City Company or engaged in other business out of the house, I could take boat across the river and run over to St. George's Fields, there to have half an hour of play with a musician, of whom you shall learn more, called Tom Shirley. After the manner

of youths I never asked myself how long this would go on without discovery: or what would be the result when it was discovered. Yet I knew very well that no Quaker could be more decided as to the sinfulness of music than my father and my uncle. Had not the great and Reverend Samuel Halliday, D.D., preached before the Protector on the subject of the snares spread by the devil to catch souls by means of music?

Now, one afternoon in the month of June, when the counting-house is more than commonly terrible, a message came to me that my father wished to speak with me.

I found him in his own room, his brother Paul sitting with him. His face showed astonishment and anger; that of his brother presented some appearance of sorrow—real or not, I cannot say. My uncle Paul was, as often happens in a family, a reduced copy of his elder brother. He was not so tall: not so portly: not so red in the face: not so swollen in the neck: yet he was tall and portly and red and swollen. He was shaking his head as I entered, saying, 'Dear! dear! dear! And in our family too—in our family!'

'Son William,' said my father, 'I have heard a serious thing.'

'What is that, Sir, if I may ask?'

'I learn from my brother, who had it from Matthew——

'From Matthew,' my uncle interposed solemnly.

'That you lose no opportunity of getting away from your desk to go on board our ships in the Pool, there to play the fiddle with the common sailors—to play the fiddle—the common fiddle—like a fellow with a bear—with the common sailors. I hear that our Captains and officers are all acquainted with this unworthy pastime of yours! I hear, further, that you have formed an acquaintance with a certain fellow named Shirley, now a prisoner in the Rules

of the King's Bench, one who makes a sinful living by playing wanton music for lewd and wicked persons at what are called Pleasure Gardens, whither resort such company as no godly youth should meet. And I hear that you spend such time as you can spare under the tuition of this person.'

He stopped. My uncle took up the word.

'All these things I am assured by my son Matthew to be the case. I have informed Matthew that in my opinion it was right and even necessary that they should be brought before the notice of my brother.'

'I wait thy reply, Will,' said my father.

'It is all quite true, Sir.'

'Quite true.' I felt a little sinking of the heart because of the disappointment and sadness in his voice. 'But,' he went on, 'what is the meaning of it? For my own part I see no good purpose to be gained by music. On the other hand my grandfather, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Halliday, hath clearly shown in his book of godly discourses, that music, especially music with dancing, is the surest bait by which the devil draws souls to destruction. People, I am aware, will have music. At our Company's feasts music attends: at the Lord Mayor's banquets there is music: at the Lord Mayor's Show there is music: at many churches there is an organ: but what hast thou to do with music, Will? It is thy part to become a merchant, bent on serious work: and outside the counting-house to become a magistrate. What hast thou to do with music?'

He spoke, being much moved, kindly—because—alas! he loved his son.

'Sir,' I said, 'it is all most true. There is nothing that I love so much as music.'

'Consider,' he went on. 'There is no place for music in the life before thee. All day long learning thy work in

the counting-house: some time to succeed me in this room. How is it possible for a young man who stoops to make music on catgut with a bow to become a serious merchant, respected in the City?'

'Indeed, Sir, I do not know.'

'How will it be possible for you to advance the interests of the House—nay, to maintain the interests of the House, when it is known that you are a common scraper on a crowd like a one-legged man with a Jack in the Green?'

Now I might even then have submitted and promised and given up my crowd, or fiddle, and so pleased my father and remained in his favour. But this was one of those moments which are turning-points in a man's life. Besides, I was young; I was inexperienced. And an overwhelming disgust fell upon my soul as I thought of the counting-house and the ledgers and the long hours in the dingy place driving the quill all the day. So, without understanding what the words meant, I broke out impatiently:

'Sir,' I said, 'with submission, I would ask your leave to give up my place in this office.'

'Give up? Give up?' he cried, growing purple in the face. 'Does the boy know what he means?'

'Give up?' cried my uncle. 'Is the boy mad? Give up his prospects in this House—this—the soundest House in the whole City? Nephew Will, wouldst starve?'

'I will make a living by music.'

'Make a living—a living—make a living—by music? What? To play the fiddle in a tavern? To play in the gallery while your father is feasting below?'

'Nay, sir; but there are other ways.'

'Hark ye, Will; let this stop. Back to thy desk, lest something happen.' My father spoke with sudden sternness.

'Nay, sir; but I am serious.'

'Ay—ay? Serious? Then am I serious, too. Understand, then, that I own no son who disgraces the City family to which he belongs by becoming a common musician. Choose. Take thy fiddle and give up me—this office—thine inheritance—thine inheritance, mind, or lay down the fiddle and go back to thy desk. There, sir, I am, I hope, serious enough.'

He was. My father was a masterful man at all times: he was perfectly serious. Now the sons of masterful men are themselves often masterful. I walked out of the counting-house without a word.

I am conscious that there is no excuse for a disobedient son. I ought to have accepted any orders that my father might choose to lay upon me. But to part with my fiddle, to give up music; to abandon that sweet refreshment of the soul: oh! it was too much.

Moreover, no one knew better than myself the inveterate hatred with which my father and the whole of my family regarded what they called the tinkling cymbal which they thought leads souls to destruction. Had I seen any gleam of hope that there would be a relenting, I would have waited. But there was none. Therefore I cast obedience to the winds, and left the room without a word.

Had I known what awaited me: the misfortunes which were to drag me down almost unto a shameful death, in consequence of this act of disobedience, I might have given way.

But perhaps not: for in all my troubles there were two things which cheered and sustained me. I enjoyed at all times, so you shall learn, the support of love and the refreshment of music.

Had my father known of these misfortunes would he have given way? I doubt it. Misfortune does not destroy

the soul, but music does. So he would say and so think, and conduct his relations with his own accordingly.

I walked out of the counting-house. At the door I met, face to face, the informer, my cousin Matthew, who had caused all this trouble.

He was attired as becomes a responsible merchant, though as yet only a clerk or factor with the other clerks. He wore a brown coat with silver buttons: white silk stockings: silver buckles in his shoes: silver braid upon his hat: a silver chain with seals hanging from his fob: with white lace ruffles and neckerchief as fine as those of his father, or of any merchant on Change.

He met me, I say, face to face, and for the first time within my knowledge, he grinned when he met me. For he knew what had been said to me. He grinned with a look of such devilish glee that I understood for the first time how much he hated me. Why? I had never crossed him. Because I was the son of the senior partner whose place I was to take and of the richer man of the two Partners. His would be the subordinate position with a third only of the profits. Therefore my cousin hated me. He, I say, noted my discomfiture. Now, at that moment, I was in no mood for mockery.

Something in my face stopped his grinning. He became suddenly grave: he drooped his eyes: he made as if he would pass by me and so into the house.

'Villain and maker of mischief!' I cried. Then I fell upon him. I had but my fists: he had his stick: I was eighteen: he was five-and-twenty: he was heavier and taller: well; there is little credit, because he was a poor fighter: in two minutes I had his stick from him, and in three more I had broken it over his head and his shoulders. However, had his wind and his strength equalled his hatred and desire that the stick should be broken over my

shoulders instead of his, the result would have been different.

'You shall pay—you shall pay—you shall pay for this,' he gasped, lying prostrate.

I kicked him out of my way as if he had been a dog and strode off, my cheek aflame, my hand trembling and my limbs stiffened with the joy of the fight and the victory. Come what might, I had whipped my cousin, like the cur he was. A thing to remember.

I have never repented that act of justice. The memory of it brought many woes upon me, but I have never repented or regretted it. And certain I am that to the day of his miserable death Matthew never forgot it. Nor did I.

CHAPTER II.

A CITY OF REFUGE.

My last recollection of the counting-house is that of Matthew lying in a heap and shaking his fist at me, while, behind, my uncle's face looks out amazed upon the spectacle from one door, and the clerks in a crowd contemplate the discomfiture of Mr. Matthew from another door. Then I strode off, I say, like a gamecock after a victory, head erect, cheek flushed, legs straight. Ha! I am always glad that I drubbed my cousin, just once. A righteous drubbing it was, too, if ever there was one. It hanselled the new life. After it, there was no return possible.

And so home—though the house in College Street could no longer be called a home—I now had no home—I was turned into the street. However, I went upstairs to my own room—mine no longer. I looked about. In the cupboard I found a black box in which I placed every-

thing I could call my own: my music; my linen and my clothes. On the wall hung the miniature of my mother. Happily she had not lived to see the banishment of her son: this I put in my pocket. The fiddle I laid in its case. Then with my cudgel under my arm and carrying the fiddle in one hand and the box on my shoulder I descended the stairs—now, I must confess, with a sinking heart—and found myself in the street.

I had in my purse five guineas—the son of a most solid and substantial merchant, and I had no more than five guineas in the world. What could I do to earn a living? Since I had been for two years in my father's counting-house I might be supposed to know something of affairs. Alas! I knew nothing. One art or accomplishment I possessed: and one alone. I could play the fiddle. Now that I had to depend upon my playing for a livelihood, I began to ask whether I could play well enough. At all events, I could play vigorously. But the die was cast. I had made my choice, and must make the best of it. Besides, had I not drubbed my cousin Matthew, and that, as they say, with authority?

You have heard how my father accused me of intimacy with a person named Shirley, a resident in the Rules of the King's Bench. That charge I could not deny. Indeed, the person named Shirley, by all his friends called Tom, had been of late my master. Every spare hour that I had was spent with him, practising with him and learning from him. He taught a finer style than I could learn from the sailors. When I went into the counting-house I had no longer any spare hours, except in the evening, and then my master was engaged earning his bread in an orchestra. Still I could manage to visit him sometimes on Sunday evenings, when my father was generally discoursing with friends who loved, like him, to limit and

make as narrow as they could the mercies of the Almighty.

At this moment I could think of no one except Tom Shirley who could help me or advise me.

I therefore lugged my box and my violin to the Three Cranes, and took boat across to Moldstrand Stairs, from which it is an easy half mile by pleasant lanes, Love Lane and Gravel Lane, past Looman's Pond to St. George's Fields, where Tom Shirley lived.

It was a little after noon when I arrived at the house. It was one of three or four cottages standing in a row, every cottage consisting of four or five rooms. They are pleasing retreats, each having a small front garden where lilacs, laburnums, hollyhock, sunflowers, tulips, and other flowers and bushes grow. In front of the garden flows languidly one of the many little streams which cross the fields and meadows of Southwark: a rustic bridge with a single handrail crosses the stream.

The region of St. George's Fields, as is very well known, has a reputation which, in fact, is well deserved. The fact that it is covered with shallow ponds, some of which are little better than mere laystalls, causes it to be frequented on Sundays and on summer evenings by the rude and barbarous people who come here to hunt ducks with dogs—a horrid sport: some of them even throw cats into the water and set their dogs at them. The same people come here for prize fights, but they say that the combatants have an understanding beforehand how long the fight is to last: some come for quarter-staff practice: some come for hockey or for football. Outside the Fields there are many taverns and places of entertainment: on the Fields there is at least one, the notorious Dog and Duck. Every evening except in winter these places are full of people who come to dance and drink and sing. Every kind of

wickedness is openly practised here: if a man would gamble, here are the companions for him and here are rooms where he can play: if he would meet women as deboshed as himself, here they may be found.

It is unfortunate for Southwark and its environs that everything seems to have conspired to give it a bad name. First of all, it was formerly outside the jurisdiction of the City, so that all the villains and criminals of the City got across the water and found refuge here. Next, the government of the place was not single, but divided by the manors, so that a rogue might pass from one manor into another and so escape: thirdly, the Sanctuary of Southwark tolerated after the Reformation at St. Mary Overies, grew to accommodate as great a number as that in Westminster, where they only lately pulled down the gray old Tower which looked like a donjon-keep rather than the walls enclosing two chapels. I know not whether there was such a tower at Montagu Close, but within my recollection no officer of the law dared to arrest any sanctuary man in Mint Street—their latest refuge: nor did any person with property to lose venture into that street. For first his hat would be snatched off: then his wig: then his silk handkerchief: then he would be hustled, thrown, and kicked: when he was permitted to get up it was without watch, chain, buckles, shoes, lace cravat, ruffles. Fortunate if he was allowed to escape with no more injury. The presence of these villains was alone enough to give the place a bad name. But there was more. Prisons there must be, but in Southwark there were too many. The King's Bench Prison: the Marshalsea: the Borough Compter: the Clink: the White Lyon. So many prisons in a place so thinly populated produced a saddening effect. And, besides, there are those who live in the Rules, which are themselves a kind of prison,

but without walls. In another part, along the Embankment, the Show Folk used to live: those who act: those who write plays and songs: those who dance and tumble: mimes, musicians, buffoons: and those who live by the bear-baiting, badger-baiting, bull-baiting, and cock-throwing, which are the favourite sports of Southwark.

These considerations are quite sufficient to account for the evil reputation which clings to the Borough. They do not, however, prevent it from being a place of great resort for those who come up from Kent and Surrey on business, and they do not for obvious reasons prevent the place from being inhabited by the prisoners of the Rules.

When I arrived, Tom Shirley was playing on the harpsichord, his head in a white nightcap, his wig hanging on a nail. As he played, not looking at notes or keys, his face was turned upwards and his eyes were rapt. As one watched him his face changed in expression with the various emotions of the music: no man, certainly, was more moved by music than Tom Shirley. No man, also, could more certainly bring out the very soul of the music, the inner thought of the composer. He played as if he loved playing, which indeed he did, whether it was a country dance or a minuet, or an oratorio or a Roman Catholic Mass. It was a fine face, delicate in outline; full of expression: the face of a musician: it lacked the firmness which belongs to one who fights: he was no gladiator in the arena: a face full of sweetness. Everyone loved Tom Shirley. As for age, he was then about five-and-twenty.

I stood at the open door and looked in, listening, for at such moments he heard nothing. There was another door opposite leading to the kitchen, where his wife was engaged in some domestic work. Presently, she lifted her head and saw me. 'Father,' she cried, 'here is Will!'

He heard that: brought his fingers down with a splendid

chord and sprang to his feet. 'Will? In the morning? What is the meaning—why this box?'

'I have come away, Tom. I have left the counting-house for good.'

'What? You have deserted the money-bags? You have run away for the sake of music?'

'My father has turned me out.'

'And you have chosen music. Good—good—what could you have done better? Wife, hear this. Will has run away. He will play the fiddle in the orchestra rather than become an Alderman and Lord Mayor.'

'I want to live as you live, Tom.'

'If you can, boy, you shall.' Now it was the humour of Tom to speak of his own cottage and his manner of life as if both were stately and sumptuous. 'Very few,' he added proudly, 'can live as we live.' He looked proudly round. The room was about ten feet square: low, painted drab, without ornament, without curtains: there were a few shelves: a cupboard: a small table. two brass candlesticks, a brass pair of snuffers: four rush-bottomed chairs, and nothing more.

Tom was dressed in an old brown coat with patches on the elbows, the wrists frayed and the buttons gone. To be sure he had a finer coat for the orchestra. His stockings were of worsted, darned in many places: a woollen wrapper was round his neck. Everything proclaimed poverty: of course people who are not poor do not live in the Rules. 'Few,' he repeated, 'are privileged to live as I live.' I have never known whether this was a craze or his humour to pretend that he fared sumptuously: was lodged like a prince: and received the wages of an ambassador. Perhaps it was mere habit; a way of presenting his own life to himself by exaggeration and pretence which he had somehow grown to believe.

'You ask, Will, a thing difficult of achievement.'

'But gradually—little by little. One would never expect it all at once.'

'Ay, there we talk sense. But first, why hath Sir Peter behaved with this (apparent) harshness? I would not judge him hastily. Therefore I say, apparent.'

'Because he found out at last—my cousin Matthew told him—that I came here to play the fiddle. So he gave me the choice—either to give up the counting-house or to give up the music. And I gave up the counting-house, Tom. I don't care what happens so that I get out of the counting-house.'

'Good—lad—good.'

'And I drubbed my cousin—I paid him with his own stick. And here I am.'

He took my hand, his honest face beaming with satisfaction. At that moment, his young sister Alice came back from making some purchases in the Borough High Street. 'Alice, my dear,' he said, 'Will has been turned out of house and home by his father—sent out into the streets without a penny.'

Alice burst into tears.

When I think of Alice at that moment, my heart swells, my eyes grow humid. She was then fifteen, an age when the child and the woman meet, and one knows not whether to expect the one or the other. When Alice burst into tears it was the child who wept: she had always loved me with a childish unconsciousness: she was only beginning to understand that I was not her brother.

You know how sweet a flower will sometimes spring up in the most unlovely spot. Well: in this place, close to the Dog and Duck, with prodigals and rakes and painted Jezebels always before her eyes, this child grew up sweet and tender and white as the snow. I have never known

any girl upon whom the continual sight—not to be concealed—of gross vice produced so little effect: it was as if the eyes of her soul involuntarily closed to the meaning of such things. Such sweetness, such purity, was stamped upon her face then as afterwards. Never, surely, was there a face that showed so plain and clear to read that the thoughts behind it were not earthly or common.

'It is the soul of music that possesses her,' said her brother once. 'She hath imbibed that soul day by day. Will, 'tis a saintly child. Sometimes I fear that she may be carried away like Elijah.'

Well, when I saw those tears, I was seized with a kind of joyful compassion and, so to speak, happy shame, to think that those tears were for me. I drew her gently and kissed her.

'Why, nothing better could have happened to him, thou little simpleton,' said her brother. Warming up with his subject, he became eloquent. 'He shall do much better—far better—than if he had stayed in the counting-house. He shall not be weighed down with a load of riches: he shall have to work in order to live—believe me, Will, Art must be forced by necessity: where there is no necessity there is no Art: when riches creep in, Art becomes a toy. Because he must work, therefore he will be stimulated to do great things. He shall never set his mind upon growing rich: he shall remain poor.'

'Not too poor,' said his wife gently. Indeed, her poor shabby dress showed what she meant.

'Peace, woman. He shall be poor, I say. Happy lad! He shall be poor. He shall never have money in a stocking, and he shall never want any. He shall live like the sparrows, from day to day, fed by the bounty of the Lord.'

'Who loveth the Dog and Duck,' said his wife.

The husband frowned. 'To sum up, Will, thy lot shall

be the happiest that the world can give. What?' He lifted his hand and his eyes grew brighter. 'For the musician the curse of labour is remitted: for him there is no longing after riches: for him there is no flattery of great men: for him there is no meanness; for him there are no base arts: for him there is no wriggling: for him there are no back stairs: for him there is no patron.—In a word, Will, the musician is the only free man in the world.'

'In the Rules, you mean, my dear.' This was his wife's correction.

'Will,' said Alice, 'shall you really become like Tom?'

'Truly, Alice, if I can.'

'Wife,' said Tom, 'Will shall stay with us. He can sleep in the garret. We must find a mattress somewhere.'

'Nay, but I must pay my footing. See, Tom. I have five guineas.' I showed this mine of wealth. He took one and gave it to his wife.

'Aha!' he laughed. 'Buy him a mattress and a blanket, wife. And this evening we will have a bowl of punch. Will, we shall fare like Kings and like the Great ones of the Earth.'

CHAPTER III.

A WAY TO LIVE.

I THINK that Tom Shirley was the most good-natured man in the whole world: the most ready to do anything he could for anybody: always cheerful: always happy: partly, I suppose, because he looked at everything through spectacles of imagination. He joined, however, to his passion for music another which belonged to a lower world: namely, for punch. Yet he was not an intemperate man: he showed neither purple cheeks, nor a double chin, nor a swollen

neck, nor a rubicund nose—all of which were common sights on Change and in the streets of London. The reason why he displayed no signs of drink was that he could seldom gratify his passion for punch by reason of his poverty, and that in eating, which, I believe, also contributes its share to the puffing out of the neck and the painting of the nose, such as may be seen on Change, he was always as moderate, although he thought every meal a feast, as became his slender means.

I do not know how he got into the King's Bench, but the thing is so easy that one marvels that so many are able to keep out. They put him in and kept him there for a time, when he was enabled to obtain the privilege of the Rules. He was, as he boasted, always rich, because he thought he was rich. His wife took from him, every week, the whole of his wages, otherwise he would have given them away.

At one o'clock Alice laid the cloth and we had dinner. Tom lifted the knife and fork and held it over the cold boiled beef as if fearing to mar that delicate dish by a false or clumsy cut. 'Is there anything,' he said, 'more delicious to the palate than cold boiled beef? It must be cut delicately and with judgment—with judgment, Will.' He proceeded to exercise judgment. There was a cabbage on the table. 'This delicacy,' he said, 'is actually grown for us—for us—in the gardens of Lambeth Marsh. Remark the crispness of it: there is a solid heart for you: there is colour: there is flavour.' All this was, I remember, the grossest flattery. 'Oat cake,' he said, breaking a piece. 'Some, I believe, prefer wheaten bread. They do wrong. Viands must not be judged by their cost but by their fitness to others on the table, and by the season. Remember, Will, that with cold boiled beef, oat cake is your only eating.' He poured out some beer into a glass and held

it up to the light. 'Watch the sparkles: hear the humming: strong October this'—it was the most common small beer —'have a care, Will, have a care.' And so on, turning the simple meal into a banquet.

His wife and sister received these extravagances without a smile. They were used to them. The latter, at least, believed that they were the simple truth. The poor girl was innocently proud of her humble home, this cottage on St. George's Fields, within the Rules.

After dinner, we talked. As the subject was Music, Tom was somewhat carried away; yet there was method in his madness.

'I said, lad, that there would be no Art if there were no necessity. 'Tis Poverty alone makes men become musicians and painters and poets. Where can you find a rich man who was ever a great artist? I am no scholar, but I have asked scholars this question, and they agree with me that riches destroy Art. Hardly may Dives become even a Connoisseur. He may become a general or a statesman: we do not take all from him: we leave him something—but not the best—that we keep for ourselves—we keep Art for ourselves. As for a rich merchant becoming a musician or a painter—it is impossible: one laughs at the very thought.'

'Well, that danger is gone, Tom, so far as I am concerned.'

'Ay. The reason, I take it, is that Art demands the whole man—not a bit of him—the whole man—all his soul, all his mind, all his thoughts, all his strength. You must give all that to music, Will.'

'I ask nothing better.'

'Another reason is that Art raises a man's thoughts to a higher level than is wanted for Trade. It is impossible for a man's mind to soar or to sink according as he thinks

of art or trade. You will remember, Will, for your comfort, that your mind is raised above the City.'

'I will remember.'

'Well, then, let us think about what is best to be done.'

He pondered a little. Then he smiled.

'Put pride in pocket, Will. Now what would you like?'

'To write great music.'

'A worthy ambition. It has been my own. It is not for me to say whether my songs, which are nightly sung at the Dog and Duck, are great music or not. Posterity may judge. Lad, it is one thing to love music—and another thing to compose it. The latter is given to few: the former to many. It may be that it is thy gift. But I know not. Meantime, we must live.'

'I will do anything.'

'Again—put pride in pocket. Now, there is a river-side tavern at Bermondsey. It is a place for sailors and their Dolls. A rough and coarse place it is, at best. They want a fiddler from six o'clock till ten every night, and later on Saturdays.'

I heard with a shiver. To play in a sailors' tavern! It was my father's prophecy.

'Everybody must begin, Will. What? A sailors' tavern is no place for the son of a City merchant, is it? But that is gone. Thou art now nobody's son—a child of the gutter—the world is thine oyster—free of all ties—with neither brother nor cousin to say thee nay. Lucky dog! What? We must make a beginning—I say—in the gutter.'

His eyes twinkled and smiled, and I perceived without being told that he meant to try my courage. So, with a rueful countenance and a foolish sense of shame, I consented to sit in the corner of a sanded room in a common river-side tavern and to make music for common sailors and their sweethearts.

'Why,' said Tom, 'that is well. And now, my lad, remember. There are no better judges of a fiddle than sailors. They love their music as they love their lobscouse, hot and strong and plenty. Give it elbow, Will. They are not for fine fingering or for cunning strokes and effects—they like the tune to come out full and sweet. They will be thy masters. As for dancing, they like the time to be marked as well as the tune. Find out how they like to take it. There is one time for a hornpipe and another for a jig. As for pay——'

I will not complete the sentence. For such as myself there must be a Day of Small Things. But one need not confess how very small these things have been.

Thus it was that I found an Asylum—a City of Refuge—in the Rules of the King's Bench, when I was turned out by my own people. And in this way I became that despised and contemptible object, a Common Fiddler. I played, not without glory, every night, to a company as low as could be found. At least, I thought so at the time. Later on, it is true, I found a lower company still. And I dare say there are assemblies of men and women even lower. My fellows, at least, were honest, and their companions were, at least, what the men had made them.

We settled the business that very afternoon, walking over to Bermondsey. The landlord said I was very young, but if I could fiddle he did not mind that, only it must be remembered in the pay. So I was engaged to begin the next day. In the evening I went with Tom to the Dog and Duck, where he played first fiddle in the Orchestra, and sat in the musicians' gallery. About this place more anon. At twelve o'clock the music ceased and I walked home with Tom. I remember, it was then a fine clear night in September: the wind blew chill across the marshes: it had come up with the flow of the river: the moon was riding

high: a strange elation possessed my soul: for my independence was beginning: four guineas in my pocket: and a place with so many shillings a week to live upon: nothing to do but to work at music: and to live with the best-hearted man in the whole world.

We got home. Alice had gone to bed. Tom's wife was sitting up for us, the bowl of punch was ready for us, not too big a bowl, because Tom's weakness where punch was concerned was well known. He drank my success in one glass: my future operas and oratorios in the second: my joyful independence in the third: and my happy release in the fourth. That finished the bowl and we went to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE AND MUSIC.

You need not be told how I lived for the next three or four years. I took what came. Pride remained in pocket. I fiddled a wedding-party to church and home again. I fiddled the Company of Fellowship Porters through the streets when they held their yearly feast. I fiddled for sailors; I fiddled at beanfeasts; I fiddled for Free Masons; I fiddled in taverns; I fiddled here and there and everywhere, quite unconcerned, even though I was playing in the gallery of a City company's hall, and actually saw my cousin sitting in state among the guests at the feast below, and knew that he saw me and rejoiced at the sight, in his ignorance of the consolations of music.

Nothing in those days came amiss to me. One who makes music for his livelihood has no cause to be ashamed of playing for anyone. It does not seem an occupation such as one would choose, to spend the evening in a chair,

stuck in a corner out of the way, in a stinking room, for rough fellows to dance hornpipes: the work does not lift up the soul to the level which Tom Shirley claimed for the musician. But this was only the pot-boiling work. I had the mornings to myself, when I could practise and attempt composition. Besides, at eighteen, the present, if one belongs to a calling which has a career, is of very little importance: the real life lies before: the boy lives for the future. I was going, in those days, to be a great composer like Handel. I was going to write oratorios such as his: majestic, where majesty was wanted: tender, where love and pity must be depicted: devout, where piety was called for. I would write, besides, in my ambition, such things as were written by Purcell and Arne: anthems for the church: songs and madrigals and rounds and catches such as those with which my patron Tom Shirley delighted his world.

The profession of music is one which can only be followed by those who have the gift of music. That is the definition of any Art: it can only be followed by those who have the gift of that Art. In any other calling a man may serve, after a fashion, who hath not been called thereto. Many men, for example, are divines who have neither learning nor eloquence nor—the Lord help them!—religion. Many lawyers have no love for the law. Many merchants hate the counting-house. But in music no one can serve at all unless he is a musician born. He who, without the gift, would try to enter the profession breaks down at the outset, seeing that he cannot even learn to play an instrument with feeling, ease, or judgment. Nay, there are distinct ranks of music, to each of which one is raised by Nature, as much as by study. Thus, you have at the bottom, the rank and file, namely, those who can play a single instrument: next,

those who can compose and make simple music for songs, in which all that is wanted is a tuneful and spirited air with an ordinary accompaniment: next those who understand harmony and can make music of a higher character, such as anthems, part-songs, and so forth. Lastly, you have the composer in whose brains lies the knowledge of every instrument in the orchestra. He is the King of musicians: from him come the noble oratorios which delight our age and lift our souls to Heaven: from him come the masses which are sung—I have the scores of several—in Cathedrals of Roman Catholic countries. It is not for an Englishman to admire aught that belongs to Rome: but we must at least concede to the Roman Catholic the possession of noble music.

This, then, was my ambition. For four years I continued to live with my friend Tom Shirley. I held no communication with my father or any of my own people. None of them made any attempt at reconciliation. I believe they were honestly ashamed of me. The new friends I made were good and faithful: musical people have ever kindly hearts, and are loyal to each other: they do not backbite: there is no room for envy where one man plays the fiddle and another the cornet: we are all a company of brothers.

The time came when it was no longer necessary for me to play at taverns for the sailors: when I was no longer compelled to attend weddings. I obtained, one after the other, two posts, neither of which was a very great thing, but both together made it possible for me to live in some comfort. The first was that of organist at St. George's in the Borough. I had to attend the service and to play the organ twice on Sunday. the weekday services and the Gift Lectures were conducted without any singing. The Church contains, I believe, the most fashionable congrega-

tion of South London, and therefore the most critical. I do not think, however, that, while I sat in the organ-loft, they had any reason to complain either of music or of choir. There sat with me in the organ-loft, Alice, who possessed a sweet, clear, and strong voice: her brother Tom, who brought into the choir an excellent tenor: Mr. Ramage, one of my father's clerks, who lodged behind the Marshalsea, gave us a bass of indifferent quality, though he was now past fifty. Half a dozen boys and girls from the Charity School, of no great account for voices, made up our choir. I believe it was better than the average, and I think that people came on Sunday morning on purpose to hear the organ and the singing.

Mr. Ramage, or Ramage, as he was called in the Counting-house, where no title is allowed to any below the rank of partner or partner's son, kept me acquainted with events in College Street and on the wharf. My father, it was understood, never mentioned my name: the business of the Firm was never more flourishing: Mr. Matthew was constantly called in for consultations. 'And oh! Master Will,' my old friend always concluded, 'be reconciled. What is it—to give up playing the organ at Church? Why—it is nothing. Someone else will play while you sit in state in your red-velvet pew below. Give way to your father. He is a hard man, but he is just.'

It also appeared from Mr. Ramage's information that it was perfectly well known by the clerks and by Mr. Matthew, who doubtless told my father, the ways by which I had been making a living: I had been seen by one marching ahead of a sailor's wedding-party: by another fiddling in the Bermondsey Tavern: by a third in the Gallery of a City Company Hall. The Counting-house down to the messengers was humiliated: there was but one feeling among the clerks: I had brought disgrace upon the House.

'They are sorry, Master Will, for your father's sake. It is hard for him: so proud a man—with so much to be proud of—a quarter of a million, some say. Think how hard it is for him.'

'It is harder for me, Ramage,' I replied, 'to be driven to fiddle for sailors, when all I ask is to be allowed to follow music in peace. However, tell the clerks that I am sorry to have disgraced them.'

Disgraced the clerks! What did I say? Why, theirs is the lowest kind of work that the world can find for men. They were disgraced because their Master's son played the fiddle for a living. But I could not afford to consider their opinions.

Ramage knew nothing about my other place, or his entreaties would have been more fervent. I had but one answer, however. I could not give up the only work that I cared for, even to be reconciled to my father. Why, I was born for music. Shall a man fly in the face of Providence, and scorn the gifts with which he is endowed?

My other place was none other than second fiddle, Tom Shirley being the first fiddle, of the Dog and Duck.

I have mentioned the Pleasure Gardens south of the River. There are, as Londoners know very well, a great many such gardens, all alike in most respects. That is to say, there is in every one of them an avenue or walk, lined by trees which at night are festooned by thousands of lights in coloured glass lamps hanging from tree to tree. There is also in most a piece of water with swans or ducks upon it, and all round it arbours where the company take tea or punch or wine. There is a tavern where drink may be had: suppers are served in the evening: there is a floor for dancing in the open air, with a place for the band; and there is a Long Room with an organ at one end where the company promenade and listen, and where on

hot nights the band and the singers perform. In many gardens there is also a bowling-green: there is sometimes a swimming bath, and in most there is a chalybeate spring the water of which is warranted to cure anything, but especially rheumatism, gout, and the King's Evil.

Every one of these gardens employs an orchestra, and engages the services of singers. The number of musicians employed is therefore considerable. There are certainly in the south of London alone more than a dozen Gardens large enough to have a band. Besides the Dog and Duck, there are the Temple of Flora: the Lambeth Wells: the Cumberland Gardens: Vauxhall Gardens: Bermondsey Spa: St. Helena Gardens: Finch's Grotto: Cupid's Gardens: Restoration Spring Gardens—is that nearly twelve? And there are more. So that it is not difficult for a young man who can play any instrument tolerably to get a place in the orchestra of some Garden.

One would not choose such a position if Fortune gave one a choice. At the Dog and Duck there are visitors to whose pleasure we should be ashamed of ministering: people whose proper place is in the House of Correction or Bridewell: they are allowed to attend these gardens with friends who should also be denied entrance: they make the company noisy and disorderly. We gave them music that was a great deal better than they deserved: it was thrown away upon the majority: we gave them songs that were innocent and tender—Tom Shirley wrote and composed them himself: we also had to give them other songs more suited to their gross and grovelling tastes.

It was part of Tom's humour to speak of the audience at the Dog and Duck as the most polite, fashionable, and aristocratic assembly in the world. He declared that their taste in music was excellent: their attention that of a connoisseur: and their appreciation of his own songs all

that he could desire. I asked him once how he reconciled these things with their delight in the comic songs which were also provided for them. 'The aristocracy,' he said, 'must from time to time unbend: they must from time to time laugh: they laugh and they unbend when we give them a song to which in their more polite moments they would refuse to listen.' I knew very well that the company was chiefly composed of deboshed profligates: prentices who daily robbed their masters in order to come to the gardens: young gentlemen from the country; prodigal sons from the Temple and Lincoln's Inn; and tradesmen who were dissipating their capital. If good music was played they talked and laughed: at the singing of good songs they walked about or left the open platform for the dark lanes of the garden. 'You are lucky, Will,' said Tom. 'To play for such an audience brings good luck, with name and fame and riches.'

It brought me fifteen shillings a week. And as for name and fame, I never heard of either.

I did not propose to write my own history, but that of a woman with whom you have already seen me conversing. Yet my own history must be understood before hers can be related. You have been told how for my obstinate adherence to music I was turned out of my father's house: how I found a refuge: how I earned my livelihood by playing the fiddle. Now, before I come to the events which connected my fortunes with those of the lady whom I call my mistress—and that with my wife's consent—I must tell one or two events which befell me. The first of them was my courtship and my marriage. In the courtship there was no obstacle: the course of true love ran smoothly: in my marriage there were no regrets: no discords: always a full deep current of affection on both sides. A simple, plain story, in which nothing happened, so far: would to Heaven that nothing had happened, afterwards.

When a young man and a girl live under the same roof: when they share the same interests: when they have the same affections—Alice herself could not love her brother more than I did: when the home is happy in spite of poverty and its restrictions: when the hearts of the two go out to each other spontaneously, then the time must come when they will resolve upon becoming brother and sister or declared and open lovers.

When I think of this time, this truly happy time, I sometimes feel as if we were too hurried over it. I sat beside Alice every morning at breakfast and at dinner: I played to her: I composed songs for her: I even wrote verses for the music—I have some of them still, and really, though I do not pretend to be a poet, there are things in them which I admire. Poets always speak of the warblers in the grove: so did I. Love, which rhymes to grove, always burns and flames—it did so in my verses. As to the rhymes, I abolished the first and third, which was a great relief. Without the necessity of rhyming one could easily become a poet.

I say that the situation being so pleasant and so happy, I might have prolonged it: but there comes a time when a man must take the last step. The uncertainty is sweet. Can she love me? Will she perhaps say nay? Yet the pleasing pain, the charming smart, the raptured flames—I quote from my own verses, which were really like many that I have seen used in songs—become in time too much: one must perforce go on to secure the happiness beyond.

In the morning, when the weather was fine, we would walk abroad among the fields and gardens that lie stretched out behind the river bank: some of them are pretty gardens, each with its hedge and bushes filled with flowers in the summer: garden houses stand about here and there: windmills vary the landskip: the lanes are shaded by trees: at the end of one is a great stone barn,

formerly part of King Richard's Palace, of which not another stone is left. Beside the river are Lambeth Palace and Lambeth Church with a few fishermen's cottages. Over this rural place we strayed at our will, now among the lanes; picking wild flowers; recalling scraps of songs; listening to the skylark, while the fresh breeze coming up the river with the tide fanned Alice's cheek and heightened the soft colour which was one of her charms. Sometimes we left the fields and walked along the high Embankment watching the laden barges slowly going up or down and the sailing tilt-boats bound for Richmond: or the fishermen in mid-stream with their nets: or the wherries plying with their fares and the swans: admiring, in a word, the life and animation of the river at Westminster and above it. Chiefly, however, Alice loved the fields, where in the morning we were always alone save for a gardener here and there at work. Since the life that she saw around her was such as she saw —made up of debtors' prisons, noisy duck-hunters, prize-fighters and drunken profligates, what wonder if she loved to linger where she was apart from the vileness of men and women? To meditate: to muse: to sing all alone, for my companionship counted nothing: was her greatest joy. So it has continued: even now she loves to wander alone beneath the trees—they are other trees, under another sky —and to lift up her voice to Heaven, which answers by giving her thoughts, always new and always holy.

It was in the middle of May, the poet's month, when we were thus roaming in the fields. Alice carried a handful of hawthorn. She sang as she went. Dear Heart! how she sang! Yet I know not what. It was Prayer: it was Praise: it was Adoration: it was Worship: I know not what she sang. The larks were dumb because they could not sing with her.

It was the time of which I have spoken—the time of uncertainty. Never had Alice looked so heavenly sweet: she carried her hat by the strings: her hair fell about her shoulders—fair, soft hair, like silk, with a touch of gold in it. her eyes gazed upwards when the light clouds flew across the blue, as if they were things of this world trying to turn her eyes and thoughts away from the things of Heaven. I could endure the doubt no longer. I laid my arm about her waist: the song was troubled: her eyes dropped. 'Oh!' she said. 'What wilt thou?' I drew her closer. The song broke off. I kissed her head, her brow, her lips. We said nothing. She sang no more. But the larks began their hymns of joy: the clouds passed: the sun came out in splendour: the hedges seemed all to burst together into blossom.

Thus it was—so easily—so sweetly—did we pass into the condition of lovers. Yet we had been lovers all the time.

CHAPTER V.

WEDDING BELLS AND THE BOOK OF THE PLAY.

We were married without delay. Why should we wait? I should be no richer for waiting and time would be passing. We were married, therefore. It was impossible that from time to time we should not be reminded of the lowly station in which we lived. When one of my cousins was married, what preparations! what feasts arranged and provided! What troops of guests! What a noble company in the Church! What crowds afterwards—the street filled with beggars come for the broken victuals: the butchers with their din unmusical of marrow-bones and cleavers: the band of music playing outside: the

acclamations of the crowd when the bride was brought back from church: the rooms full of guests all with wedding favours: the loving-cup passing from hand to hand: the kissing of the bridesmaids: the merriment and coquetry over the bride-cake and the wedding-ring! All this I remembered and it made me sad for a moment. Not for long, for beside me stood a bride sweeter far than was any cousin of mine: and I was a musician; and I was independent.

We walked over the Fields to St. George's Church and were there married at ten o'clock in the morning. Tom gave away his sister: Alice had no bridesmaids: I had no groomsmen: there was no crowd of witnesses: there was no loving-cup. We were married in an empty church, and after marriage we walked home again to Tom's cottage.

He sat down and played a wedding march, of his own composition, made for the occasion. 'There!' he said, 'that is better than a wedding feast—yet there shall be a wedding feast and of the best.'

It was served at noon: there was a duck pie: a pair of soles: a cowslip tart—a very dainty dish: and fried sweetbreads. After dinner there was a bottle of port.

'Will,' said my brother-in-law, taking the last glass in the bottle, 'who would be one of those unhappy creatures who cannot be married without crowds and noise and a great company? Here are we, contented with ourselves: we have been married: we have had a royal banquet—your sweetbreads, wife, were a morsel for a king. You are contented, Will?'

'Quite.' For I was holding Alice by the hand.

'You never regret the flesh-pots?'

'Never—I have forgotten them.' This was not quite true, but it passed.

HE SAT DOWN AND PLAYED A WEDDING MARCH.

'I have sometimes thought'—he looked from me to Alice and from Alice to me again—'that there might have been regrets.'

'There can be none, now.'

'Good. Hands upon it, brother. We shall miss Alice, shall we not, wife? But she will not be far off. So.' A tear stood in his eye while he kissed his sister. 'Now,' he said, 'enough of sentiment. The day is before us. I have got a man to take my place to-night and another to take yours. On such an occasion, Will, we must not spare and grudge. We will see the sights of London and then—then—none of your Pleasure Gardens—we will—but I have a surprise for you.'

We sallied forth. Never was a wedding-day kept in so strange a fashion. We took oars at the Falcon Stairs to the Tower. Now Alice had spent all her life in or about the Rules of the King's Bench, but she had never seen London City or the Sights of London. To her everything was new. We showed her the Tower and the wild beasts and the arms and armour and the Royal Crown and Sceptre. After the Tower, we walked along Thames Street where are the Custom House and Billingsgate Market and the Steelyard and the Monument. We climbed up the Monument for the sake of the view: it was a clear day, and we could discern in the distance Lambeth Palace and the Church and perhaps even, one was not sure, the cottage which we had taken on the Bank. After this we went to see the Guildhall and the famous Giants: then the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange: we looked at the shops in Cheapside: they are the richest shops in the world, but the mercers and haberdashers do not put out in the window their costly stuffs to tempt the shoplifter. 'You must imagine, Alice,' I told her, 'the treasures that lie within: some time if we ever become rich you shall come

here and buy to your heart's content.' Then we entered St. Paul's, that solemn and magnificent pile: here we heard part of the afternoon service, the boys in their white surplices singing like angels, so that the tears rolled down my girl's face—they were tears of praise and prayer, not of repentance. From St. Paul's we walked up the narrow street called the Old Bailey and saw the outside of Newgate. Now had we known what things we were to do and to suffer in that awful place, I think we should have prayed for death. But Heaven mercifully withholds the future.

It was then about five o'clock. We went to a coffee-house and took some coffee and ratafia. The animation of the place; the brisk conversation; the running about of the boys: the fragrant odour of the coffee: pleased us. There were coffee-houses in the High Street, but they lacked the vivacity of this on Ludgate Hill, where Templars, Doctors of Divinity, and the mercers and goldsmiths of Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street were assembled together to talk and drink the fragrant beverage which has done so much to soften the manners of the better sort.

'And now,' said Tom, 'for my surprise.'

He called a coach and we drove not knowing whither; he was taking us to Drury Lane.

We were to celebrate our wedding-day by going to the Play.

For my own part I had never—for reasons which you will understand—been allowed to go to the Play. To sober-minded merchants the Play was a thing abhorrent: a hot-bed of temptation: the amusement of Prodigals and Profligates. Therefore I had never seen the Play. Nor had Alice or her sister-in-law, while Tom, who had once played in the orchestra, had never seen the Play since his debts carried him off to the King's Bench.

We found good places in the Boxes: the House was not

yet half full and the candles were not all lighted many of the seats were occupied by footmen waiting for their mistresses to take them: in the Pit the gentlemen, who seemed to know each other, were standing about in little knots conversing with the utmost gravity. One would have thought that affairs of state were being discussed: on the contrary, we were assured, they were arguing as to the merits or the blemishes of the piece, now in its third night.

Presently the musicians came in and the cheerful sound of tuning up began: then the House began to fill up rapidly: and the orange girls made their way about the Pit with their baskets, and walked about the back of the boxes calling out their 'fine Chaney orange—fine Chaney orange.' Why do I note these familiar things? Because they were not familiar to me: because they are always connected in my mind with what followed.

The play was 'The Country Girl.' The story is about an innocent Country Girl, an heiress, who knows nothing of London, or of the world. Her guardian wants to marry her himself for the sake of her money, though he is fifty and she twenty: as he cannot do so without certain papers being drawn up, he makes her believe that they are married by breaking a sixpence, and brings her to London with him. How she deceives him, pretends this and that, makes appointments and writes love-letters under his very nose, wrings his consent to a subterfuge and marries the man she loves—these things compose the whole play.

The first Act, I confess, touched me little. The young fellow, the lover, talks about the girl he loves: her guardian is introduced: there is no action: and there were no women. I felt no interest in the talk of the men: there was an old rake and a young rake; the soured and gloomy guardian, and the lover. They did not belong to my world, either of the City or of St. George's Fields.

·r on the stage the air of the country; one se
the the perfumes of roses and jessamine. An
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the Country Girl is dressed as a boy so th
alk in the Park without being recognised b
but she is recognised and is kissed by the ver
her guardian dreads. There is another in
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again: this is dictated by the guardian: wh
fetch sealing-wax she writes another exact
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as over too soon.

Country Girl came really from the country and the thing really happened. The name of the actress, I saw on the Play Bill, was Miss Jenny Wilmot. I am not surprised at Alice's simplicity, because the wit and sparkle of her words seemed, by the way Jenny spoke them, invented by herself on the spot. She held the House in a spell: when she left the stage the place became instantly dull and stupid: when she returned the stage became once more bright.

We went back by water: it was a fine evening: a thousand stars were gleaming in the sky and in the water. we were all silent, as happens when people have passed a day of emotions. At my brother-in-law's cottage we made a supper out of the remains of the dinner, and after supper Alice and I went away to the house we had taken at Lambeth, beside the church. And so our wedded life began.

There was another incident connected with my wedding which turned out to be the innocent cause of a great deal that happened afterwards.

Among my former friends in the City was a certain Mr. David Camlet, who had a shop in Dowgate Street for the sale of musical instruments. He allowed me the run of the place and to try different instruments; it was he who first taught me to play the harpsichord and suffered me to practise in his back parlour overlooking the little churchyard of St. Pancras. The good old man would also converse with me—say, rather, instruct me in the history of composers and their works. Of the latter he had a fine collection. In brief he was a musician born and, as we say, to the finger tips; a bachelor who wanted no wife or mistress; one who lived a simple happy life among his instruments and with his music. Whether he was rich or not, I do not know.

He knew the difficulties which surrounded me: I used to tell him all: my father's prejudice against music: my

own dislike of figures and accounts: my refuge in the highest garret when I wished to practise—only at such times when my father was out of the house: my beloved teacher in the King's Bench Rules: he encouraged me and warned me: he took the most kindly interest in my position, counselling always obedience and submission even if by so doing I was forbidden to practise at all for a time: offering his own parlour as a place of retreat where I could without fear of discovery practise as much as I pleased.

When I was turned out of the house, I made haste to inform him what had happened. He lifted up his hands in consternation. 'What?' he cried. 'You, the only son of Sir Peter Halliday, Knight, Alderman, ex-Lord Mayor, the greatest merchant in the City: the heir to a plum—what do I say? Three or four plums at the least: the future partner of so great a business: the future owner of a fleet, and the finest and best appointed fleet on the seas—and you throw all this away——'

'But,' I said, 'I will be nothing but a musician.'

'Thou shalt be a musician, lad. Wait—thou shalt have music for a hobby. It is good and useful to be a patron of music: to encourage musicians.'

'But I would be a musician by profession.'

'It is a poor profession, Will. Believe me, it is a beggarly profession. If you think of making money by it—give up that hope.'

That day I had ringing in my ears certain glowing words of Tom Shirley upon the profession and I laughed.

'What do I care about poverty, if I can only be a musician? Mr. Camlet, you have been so kind to me always, do not dissuade me. I have chosen my path,' I added with the grandeur that belongs to ignorance, 'and I abide by my lot.'

He sighed. 'Nay, lad, I will not dissuade thee. Poverty

is easy to face, when one is young: it is hard to bear when one is old.'

'Then we shall be friends still, and I may come to see you sometimes when I am a great composer.'

He took my hand. 'Will,' he said, with humid eyes, 'Music is a capricious goddess. It is not her most pious votary whom she most often rewards. Be a musician if she permits. If not, be a player only. Many are called but few are chosen. Of great composers, there are but one or two in a generation. 'Tis an eager heart, and an eager face. The Lord be good to thee, Will Halliday!'

From time to time I visited this kind old man, telling him all that I did and hiding nothing. At the thought of my playing at the riverside tavern for the sailors to dance he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. 'Why,' he said, 'it was but yesterday that I looked in at Change, because it does one good sometimes to gaze upon those who, like the pillars of St. Paul's, bear up and sustain this great edifice of London. Among the merchants, Will, I saw thy respected father. Truly there was so much dignity upon his brow: so much authority in his walk: so much mastery in his voice: so much consideration in his reception: that I marvelled how a stripling like thyself should dare to rebel. And to think that his son plays the fiddle in a sanded tavern for ragged Jack tars to dance with their Polls and Molls. I cannot choose but laugh. Pray Heaven, he never learn!'

But he did learn. My good cousin kept himself informed of my doings somehow, and was careful to let my father know.

'Sir Peter looks well,' Mr. Camlet went on. 'He is perhaps stouter than is good for him: his cheeks are red, but that is common: and his neck is swollen more than I should like my own to be. Yet he walks sturdily and will

wear yet, no doubt many a long year. London is a healthy place.'

Presently I was able to tell him that I was about to be married, being in a position which seemed to promise a sufficiency. He wished me hearty congratulations, and begged to know the happy day and the place of our abode.

On the morning after our wedding, before we had had time to look round us in our three-roomed cottage—it was designed for one of the Thames fishermen: hardly had I found time to talk over the disposition of the furniture, when I perceived, from the casement window, marching valiantly along the lane from St. George's Fields, my old friend Mr. David Camlet. The day was warm and he carried his wig and hat in one hand, mopping his head with a handkerchief.

'He comes to visit us, my dear,' I said. 'It is Mr. Camlet. What is he bringing with him?'

For beside him a man dragged a hand-cart in which lay something large and square, covered with matting.

'He is the maker of musical instruments,' I explained. 'Alice, what if—in the cart——'

'Oh, Will—if it were——'

Know that my great desire was to possess a harpsichord, which for purposes of composition is almost a necessity. But such an instrument was altogether beyond my hopes. I might as well have yearned for an organ.

He stopped where the houses began and looked about him. He made straight for our door, which was open, and knocked gently with his knuckles.

Alice went out to meet him. By this time he had put on his wig and stood with his hat under his arm.

'The newly married lady of my young friend, Master Will Halliday?' he asked. 'I knew it. In such a matter

I am never wrong. Virtue, Madam, sits on thy brow, Love upon thy lips. Permit an old man—yet a friend of thy worthy husband'—so saying he kissed her with great ceremony. Then at length, the room being rather dark after the bright sunshine, he perceived me, and shaking hands, wished me every kind of happiness.

'I am old,' he said, 'and it is too late for me to become acquainted with Love. Yet am I assured that if two people truly love one another, to the bearing of each other's burdens: to working for each other: then may life be stripped of half its terrors. I say nothing of the blessing of children, the support and prop of old age. My children, love each other always.' Alice took my hand. 'For better for worse; in poverty and in riches: love each other always.'

I drew my girl closer and kissed her. The old man coughed huskily. 'Twas a tender heart, even at seventy.

Alice gave him a chair: she also brought out the wedding cake (which she made herself—a better cake was never made) and she opened the bottle of cherry brandy we had laid in for occasions. He took a glass of the cordial to the health of the bride, and ate a piece of bride cake to our good luck.

'This fellow ought to be fortunate,' he said, nodding at me. 'He has given up all for the sake of music. He ought to be rewarded. He might have been the richest merchant on Change. But he preferred to be a musician, and to begin at the lowest part of the ladder. It is wonderful devotion.'

'Sir, I have never regretted my decision.'

'That is still more wonderful. No—no—I am wrong'—he laughed—'quite wrong. If you were to regret it, now, you would be the most thankless dog in the world. Aha! The recompense begins—in full measure—overflowing—with such a bride.'

'Oh! Sir,' murmured Alice, blushing.

He took a second glass of cherry brandy and began a speech of some length, of which I only remember the conclusion.

'Wherefore, my friends, since life is short, resolve to enjoy all that it has to give—together: and to suffer all that it has to inflict—together. There is much to enjoy that is lawful and innocent. The Lord is mindful of His own—Love is lawful and innocent: there is abiding comfort in love: trust in each other raises the soul of him who trusts and of him who is trusted: sweet music is lawful and innocent: if there is ever any doubt: if there is any trouble: if any fail in love: if the world becomes like a threatening sea: you shall find in music new strength and comfort. But why do I speak of the solace of music to Will Halliday and the sister of Tom Shirley? Therefore, I say no more.'

He stopped and rose. Alice poured out another glass of cherry brandy for him.

'I nearly forgot what I came for. Such is the effect of contemplating happiness. Will, I have thought for a long time that you wanted a harpsichord.'

'Sir, it has been ever beyond my dreams.'

'Then I am glad—because I can now supply that want. I have brought with me, dear lad—and dear blooming bride, as good an instrument as I have in my shop: no better in all the world.' He went out and called his man. We lifted the instrument—it was most beautiful not only in touch but also with its rosewood case. We set it up and I tried it.

'Oh!' Alice caught his hand and kissed it. 'Now Will is happy indeed. How can we thank you sufficiently?'

'Play upon it,' he said. 'Play daily upon it: play the

finest music only upon it. So shall your souls be raised—even to the gates of Heaven.'

Once more he drew my wife towards him and kissed her on the forehead. Then he seized my hand and shook it, and before I had time or could find words to speak or to thank him, he was gone, marching down the hot lane with the firm step of thirty, instead of seventy.

A noble gift, dictated by the most friendly feeling. Yet it led to the first misfortune of my life—one that might well have proved a misfortune impossible to be overcome.

Then began our wedded life. For two years we continued to live in that little cottage. There our first child was born, a lovely boy. Every evening I repaired to the Dog and Duck, and took my place in the orchestra. Familiarity makes one callous: I had long since ceased to regard the character of the company. They might be, as Tom pretended, the most aristocratic assembly in the world: they might be the reverse. The coloured lamps in the garden pleased me no more: nor did the sight of those who danced or the pulling of corks and the singing of songs after supper in the bowers: the ladies were no longer beautiful in my eyes: I inquired not about the entertainment except for my own part: I never looked at the fireworks. All these things to one who has to attend night after night become part of the work and not of the entertainment and amusement of life.

The musician is a being apart. He takes no part in the conduct of State or City: he is not a philosopher: or a theologian: he is not a preacher or a teacher: he writes nothing either for instruction or for amusement: in the pleasures of mankind he assists, but having no share or part in them. His place is in the gallery: they cannot do without him: he cannot live without them: but he is a creature apart.

My mornings were my own. Sometimes I walked with Alice on the terrace of Lambeth Palace: or we went down into the Marsh and walked about the meadows: we made no friends except among the humble fishermen, to whose wives Alice taught cleanliness. Sometimes, after the child came, I would leave Alice for the morning and walk into the City. Perhaps I had a hope that I might meet my father. I never did, however. I looked for him on Change: I walked in Great College Street: but I never met him. I knew beforehand that my reception would be of the coldest—but I wanted to see him and to speak with him. I went down to Billingsgate Stairs and took boat and was rowed about the ships in the Pool. There I recognised our own ships: they might have been my own, but would never be mine, now. All these things I had thrown away—ships, wharf, trade, fortune. It made me proud to think so. Yet I would have spoken to my father had I met him.

Once I met Matthew in the street and passed him touching shoulders. He looked me full in the face with the pretence of not knowing me. I commanded my temper and let him go without expostulation, which would have led to a second fight, for which I had no desire.

On two other occasions I saw him, though he did not see me. The first was on a certain afternoon in October, when it grows dark about five. I was strolling down Garlickhithe near Queenhithe. As I passed the Church of St. James's, which stands a little back with steps, I saw two figures conversing: one was a man whom I knew at once for my cousin by his shoulders and by the shape of his head. The other was a woman with a veil over her face. I knew the man next by his voice. Our Matthew had such a voice—oily and yet harsh. 'If you loved me,' he said, 'you would do this simple thing.'

'I will never do it,' she declared passionately. 'You have deceived me.'

I would not be an eavesdropper, and I passed on. Matthew, therefore, had 'deceived'—the word may mean many things—a woman. Matthew, of all men! However, it was no concern of mine.

A third time I saw him—or heard him, because I did not see him. It was in one of those taverns where small square pews are provided with high walls so that one cannot be seen. I sat in one with Tom Shirley, taking a pint of wine. All round were the voices of people carrying on business in whispers and in murmurs. Suddenly I distinguished the voice of Matthew.

'The security is good,' he said. 'There is no finer security in the City. I want the money.'

'You can have some to-morrow night.' I was destined to hear a great deal more of that grating voice. 'And the rest next week, if I can get the papers signed. It is a confidential business, I suppose.'

'Nothing is to be said. Our House does not like to borrow money, but the occasion is pressing.'

'Let us go,' I said to Tom. 'We shall learn presently all Matthew's secrets.'

'Matthew? Your cousin Matthew?'

'He is in one of the boxes. I have heard his voice. Come, Tom.'

CHAPTER VI.

A CITY FUNERAL.

THUS we lived—humble folk if you please—far from the world of wealth or of fashion.

This happiness was too great to last. We were to be stricken down, yet not unto death.

The troubles began with the death of my father.

One morning, when he ought to have been at his desk, my old friend Ramage came to see me.

'Master Will,' he said, the tears running down his cheeks, 'Master Will—'tis now too late. You will never be reconciled now.'

'What has happened?' I asked. But his troubled face told me.

'My Master fell down in a fit last night, coming home from the Company's feast. They carried him home and put him to bed. But in the night he died.'

In such a case as mine one always hopes vaguely for reconciliation, so long as there is life: without taking any steps, one thinks that a reconciliation will come of its own accord. I now believe that if I had gone to my father and put the case plainly: my manifest vocation. my incapacity for business; if I had asked his permission to continue in the musical profession. if I had, further, humbled myself so far as to admit that I deserved at his hands nothing less than to be cut off with a shilling: he might have given way. It is a terrible thing to know that your father has died with bitterness in his heart against his only son. Or, I might have sent Alice, with the child. Surely the sight of that sweet girl, the sight

of the helpless child, would have moved him. I reproached myself, in a word, when it was too late.

'Sir,' said the clerk, 'I do not believe that Mr. Matthew, or his father, will send you word of this event, or of the funeral.'

'They do not know where I live.'

'Excuse me, Sir, Mr. Matthew knows where you live and everything that you have done since you left your home. Believe me, Mr. Will, you have no greater enemy than your cousin. He has constantly inflamed your father's mind against you. It was he who told my master that you were playing for sailors at a common tavern with a red blind and a sanded floor. He told him that you were playing in the orchestra at the Dog and Duck for all the 'prentices and the demireps of town: he told him that you had married—a——'

'Stop, Ramage, lest I do my cousin a mischief. How do you know all this?'

'I listen,' he replied. 'From my desk, I can hear plainly what is said in the counting-house. I listen. I can do no good. But sometimes it is well to know what goes on.'

'It may be useful—but to listen—well—Ramage, is there more to tell?'

'This. They do not intend to invite you to the funeral. Mr. Matthew will assume the place of the heir, and his father will be chief mourner.'

'Oh! Do you tell me, old friend, when it is to take place, and I will be there.'

So he promised, though it was worth his situation if he were found out to have held any intercourse with me. In the end it proved useful to have a friend in the enemy's camp. At the time, I laughed at danger. What had I to fear from Matthew's enmity?

The manner of my father's death is common among Merchants of the City of London. Their very success makes them liable to it: the City customs favour feasting and the drinking of wine: the richer sort ride in a coach when they should be walking for health: it is seldom, indeed, that one may meet a citizen of Quality walking in the fields of which there are so many and of such a wholesome air round London, whether we go East to the fields of Mile End and Bow: or North, where, not to speak of Moorfields, there are the fields this side of Islington: or on the West, where there are the fields of Westminster and Chelsea: or South, where the whole country is a verdant meadow with orchards. I say that among the crowds who flock out on a summer evening to take the air (and other refreshments) in these fields, one may look in vain for the substantial merchant. He takes the air lolling in his coach: he feasts every day, drinking quantities of rich and strong wine such as Port or Lisbon: he stays too much indoors: the counting-house is too often but a step from the parlour.

The consequence is natural: at thirty-five the successful merchant begins to swell and to expand: his figure becomes arched or rounded: perhaps his nose grows red: at forty-five his circumference is great: his neck is swollen; his cheek is red: perhaps his nose has become what is called a Bottle. Soon after fifty, he is seized with an apoplexy. It is whispered on Change that such an one fell down stepping out of his Company's Hall, after a Feast, into the road: that he never recovered consciousness: and that he is dead. The age of fifty, I take it, is the grand Climacteric of the London Merchant.

On the day of the funeral, then, I presented myself, with Alice, properly habited, to take my place as chief Mourner. The house, within, was all hung with black cloth. The

hall and the stairs were thus covered: it was evening at eight o'clock: candles placed in sconces feebly lit up the place: at the door and on the stairs stood the undertaker's men, mutes, bearing black staves with black plumes: within, the undertaker himself was busy serving out black cloaks, tying the weepers on the hats, distributing the gloves and the rosemary, and getting ready the torches.

Upstairs, the room in which my father's body lay had been prepared for the ceremony. All the furniture—bed, chairs, everything—had been taken out: there was nothing at all in the room but the coffin on trestles: the wainscoted walls had been hung with black velvet, which looked indeed funereal as it absorbed the light of fifty or sixty wax tapers and reflected none. The tapers stood in silver sconces on the walls: they showed up the coffin, the lid of which, not yet screwed down, was laid so as to expose the white face of the deceased, grave, set, serious and full of dignity. I remembered how it looked, fiery and passionate, when my father drove me from his presence. The candles also lit up the faces of the mourners: in the midst of so much blackness their faces were white and deathlike. On the breast of the dead man lay branches of rosemary: on the lid of the coffin were branches of rosemary, of which every person present carried a sprig. On the lid of the coffin was also a large and capacious silver cup with two handles.

Only one thing relieved the blackness of the walls. It was a hatchment with the family shield. Everyone would believe, so splendid is this coat of arms, that our family must rank among the noblest in the land. But the time has passed when the City Fathers were closely connected by blood with the gentry and the aristocracy of the country: of our family one could only point to the shield: where we came from, I know not: nor how we obtained so fine a shield: nor to what station of life my ancestors

originally belonged. Family pride, however, is a harmless superstition: not one of us, I am sure, would surrender that coat of arms, or acknowledge that we were anything but a very ancient and honourable House.

When I entered the house, accompanied by Alice, I found the hall and the steps, and even the street itself, which is but narrow, crowded with the humbler class of mourners. There was a whisper of surprise, and more than one honest hand furtively grasped mine. Well: there would be few such hands to welcome Matthew.

I did not need to be told where the coffin lay. I led my wife up the stairs and so into my father's room, which was the best bedroom, on the first floor. I found the various members of the family already assembled, my Uncle Paul as I expected, with Matthew, usurping my place at the head of the coffin. My cousins, of whom there were five-and-twenty at least, including my Uncle Paul's wife and two daughters, showed signs of profound astonishment at the sight of the banished son. The Alderman, for his part, held up his hands in amazement, and looked up to Heaven as if to protest against this assertion of filial rights. The girls, who were as amiable as their brother Matthew, stared with more rudeness than one would expect even from a Wappinger, at Alice. They knew not, perhaps, that I had taken a wife: to a natural curiosity on such a subject they affected a contempt which they took no pains to disguise.

There was a man standing behind my cousin whom I knew not: nor did I understand by what right he sto[illegible] among us at all: a tall thin figure somewhat bowed [illegible] years: a lean and wrinkled face: his appearance [illegible] with distrust at the outset—let no o[illegible] thoughts are best thoughts. He sto[illegible] something to my cousin—whose fa[illegible]

trouble of some kind, but not grief. Matthew started, and looked at me with astonishment.

I stepped forward, drawing Alice with me. 'Uncle Paul,' I said, 'I take my place as my father's chief mourner.'

My cousin glared at me, as if threatening to dispute the point, but he gave way and retired to my left hand. Thus, Alice beside me, my uncle Paul at my right, and Matthew at my left, I waited the arrival of the funeral guests.

Meantime, the ladies moaned and wailed. Outside, the women-servants on the stairs lifted up their lamentation. The crying of the women at a funeral hath in it little reality of grief: yet it penetrates to the soul of those who hear it. As each new guest arrived, the wail was raised anew: the louder in proportion to the rank of the arrival, in so much that when the Lord Mayor himself walked up the stairs the lament became a shriek.

The undertaker whispered in my ear that all were present.

I looked about me. 'Twas not in human nature to avoid a sense of honour and glory in looking upon so honourab[illegible] company. They proclaimed by their presence the re[illegible] which [illegible] regarded my father. Here, besid[illegible] as, [illegible] ord Mayor and Alderman, the [illegible] Ty[illegible] he Recorder, the Common S[illegible] of St. Paul's, the [illegible] nd many of the [illegible] ere there to do [illegible] there to receive [illegible] spect in which I [illegible] ets. [illegible] looked around. The

wailing ceased. All eyes were turned to me as I drank from the cup—it was hypocras, a drink much loved at City feasts. Then I handed it to Alice, who drank and gave it back to me. Then to my uncle the Alderman, after whom it went round. Down below, in the hall, there was the solemn drinking of wine. We drank thus to the memory of the dead: in old times, I am assured, the mourners drank to the repose of the soul just gone out of the body. For memory or for repose, it is an old custom which one would not willingly neglect.

After this ceremony the ladies began once more their wailing and groaning. They make too much of this custom. It is not in reason that girls like my cousins Amelia and Sophia should be so torn and lacerated by grief as their wails betokened. Indeed, I saw them after the funeral talking and laughing as they went away.

We then descended the stairs and waited below while the men went up to finish their work and to shut out the face of the dead man for ever from the world.

They brought out the coffin. The housekeeper with one last wail of grief—one hopes there was some sincerity in it—locked the door of the death chamber: she locked it noisily, so that all might hear: she turned the handle loudly, so that all might be sure that the door was shut: she had before put out the wax candles: out of respect for the late occupant the room would not be opened or used again for years: it would remain as it was with the black velvet hangings and the silver sconces. This is one of the privileges accorded to wealth—an empty honour, but one that is envied by those who cannot afford to spare a room. What can the dead man know or feel or care while the black velvet grows brown and shabby, and the silver sconces become yellow, and the sunbeams through the shutters slowly steal round the room, and except for the

dancing of the motes in the sunlight there is no motion or sound or touch of life or light in the solitude and silence of the chamber? It is giving Death to Death—not the Life for which we pray, for which we hope and trust.

The pall was of velvet with a gold fringe and gold embroidery. I knew it for the parish pall bequeathed by some pious person for the use of parishioners. When all was ready the undertaker marshalled the procession. First marched two conductors with staves and plumes: then followed six men in long black cloaks, two and two; then one bearing the Standard, with black plumes: then, eighteen men in long black cloaks as before, all being servants to the Deceased: then the Minister of the Parish: after him an officer of Arms carrying a knight's sword and target, helm and crest: with him another officer of Arms carrying the shield, both in their tabards or embroidered coats: then the Body, the pall being borne by six Merchants between men carrying the Shields of the City: of the Company: and of Bridewell, Christ's Hospital, St. Bartholomew's and St. Thomas's, of which the Deceased was a Governor. Then I followed as chief mourner with my wife: after me the Alderman my uncle and his lady. Then came Matthew. With him should have walked one of his sisters: but there stepped out of the crowd a woman in black holding a handkerchief to her face. Who she was I knew not. After them came the rest of the cousins. Then followed the Lord Mayor and the City Fathers; and, lastly, the clerks, porters, stevedores, bargemen, and others in the service of the House. In our hands we carried, as we went, lighted torches: a considerable number of people came out to see the funeral: they lined the street, which by the flames of the torches was lit up as if it was daylight. The faces at the windows: the crowds in the street: the length of the procession

filled my soul with pride, though well I knew that I was but a castaway from the affections of the dead man whom these people honoured.

The procession had not far to go: the parish church, that of St. Michael Paternoster Royal, is but a short distance down the street: it is the church in which Whittington was buried, his tomb and his ashes being destroyed in the Great Fire a hundred years ago. The Church, like the house, was hung with black and lit by wax candles and our torches. The Rector read the service with a solemnity which, I believe, affected all hearts. After the reading of that part which belongs to the Church we carried the body to the churchyard at the back—a very small churchyard: there we lowered the coffin into the grave—I observed that the mould seemed to consist entirely of skulls and bones—and when dust was given to dust and ashes to ashes, we dashed our torches upon the ground and extinguished the flames. Then in darkness we separated and went each his own way. I observed that the lady who walked with Matthew left him when the ceremony was over. The weeping of the women ceased and the whispers of the men: everybody talked aloud and cheerfully. No more mourning for my father: pity and regret were buried in the grave with him: they became the dust and ashes which we strewed upon the coffin. He had gone hence to be no more seen: to be no more wept over. But, as you shall shortly hear, the dead man still retained in his hands the power of doing good or evil.

Matthew spoke to me as we left the Churchyard.

'Cousin,' he said, with more civility than I expected, 'if you can come to the counting-house to-morrow morning you will learn your father's testamentary dispositions. The will is to be opened and read at ten o'clock.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE READING OF THE WILL.

'We will make him sell his Reversionary interest'—the voice was curiously harsh and grating—'and you will then be able to take the whole.'

You know how, sometimes, one hears things in a mysterious way which one would not hear under ordinary circumstances. I was standing in the outer counting-house, in the room assigned to the accountants. In the inner counting-house, I knew, my cousin was sitting. Without being told anything more, I guessed that the voice belonged to the tall lean man who was present at the funeral, and that he was addressing Matthew, and that he was talking about me. And, without any reason, I assumed a mental attitude of caution. They were going to make me sell something, were they?

When I was called into the room I found that I was so far right, inasmuch as the only two persons in the room were my cousin and the lean man, who by his black dress I perceived to be an attorney.

Now, I daresay that there are attorneys in the City of London whose lives are as holy as that of any Bishop or Divine. At the same time it is a matter of common notoriety that the City contains a swarm of vermin—if I may speak plainly—who are versed in every kind of chicanery: who know how to catch hold of every possible objection: and who spend the whole of their creeping lives in wresting, twisting, and turning the letter of the law to their own advantage, under the pretence of advantage to their clients. These are the attorneys who suggest

and encourage disputes and lawsuits between persons who would otherwise remain friends: these are those who keep cases running on for years, eating up the estates: when they fasten upon a man, it is the spider fastening on a big fat fly: they never leave him until they land him in a debtor's prison, naked and destitute. I have observed that a course of life, such as that indicated above, presently stamps the face with a look which cannot be mistaken: the eyes draw together: the mouth grows straight and hard: the lips become thin: the nose insensibly, even if it be originally a snub, becomes like the beak of a crow—the creature which devours the offal in the street: the cheeks are no longer flesh and skin, but wrinkled parchment: the aspect of the man becomes, in a word, such as that of the man who sat at the table, a bundle of papers before him.

I knew, I say, that Mr. Probus—which was his name—was an attorney at the outset. His black coat: his wig: his general aspect: left no doubt upon my mind. And from the outset I disliked and distrusted the man.

The last time I had entered this room was to make my choice between my father and my music. The memory of the dignified figure in the great chair behind the table: his voice of austerity: his expectation of immediate obedience made my eyes dim for a moment. Not for long, because one would not show any tenderness before Matthew.

With some merchants the counting-house is furnished with no more than what is wanted: in this wharf it was a substantial house of brick in which certain persons slept every night for the better security of the strong-room in the cellars below. The principal room, that which had been my father's, had two windows looking out upon the river: the room was carpeted: family portraits hung upon the walls: the furniture was solid mahogany: no one who

worked in such a room could be anything but a substantial merchant.

My cousin looked up and sulkily pointed to a chair.

At this time Matthew Halliday presented the appearance of a responsible City Merchant. His dress was sober, yet of the best: nobody had whiter ruffles at his wrist or at his shirt-front: nobody wore a neckcloth of more costly lace: his gold buttons, gold buckles, and gold laced hat proclaimed him an independent person: he carried a large gold watch and a gold snuff-box: he wore a large signet-ring on his right thumb: his face was grave beyond his years: this morning it presented an appearance which in lesser men is called sulky. I knew the look well, from old experience. It meant that something had gone wrong. All my life long I had experienced at the hands of this cousin an animosity which I can only explain by supposing a resentment against one who stood between himself and a rich man's estate. As a boy—I was four or five years younger than himself—he would take from me, and destroy, things I cherished: he invented lies and brought false accusations against me; he teased, pinched, bullied me when no one was looking. When I grew big enough I fought him. At first I got beaten: but I went on growing and presently I beat him. Then, if he attempted any more false accusations he knew that he would have to fight me again; a consideration which made him virtuous.

'Cousin,' he said coldly, 'this gentleman is Mr. Probus, the new attorney of the House. Mr. Littleton, the late attorney, is dead. Mr. Probus will henceforth conduct our affairs.'

'Unworthily,' said Mr. Probus.

'That is my concern,' Matthew replied with great dignity. 'I hope I know how to choose and to appoint my agents.'

'Sir'—Mr. Probus turned to me—'it has ever been the business of my life to study the good of my fellow man. My motto is one taken from an ancient source—you will allow one of the learned profession to have some tincture of Latin. The words are—ahem!—*Integer vitæ scelerisque Probus.* That is to say: Probus—Probus, Attorney-at-Law; *vitæ*, lived; *integer*, respected; *scelerisque*, and trusted. Such, Sir, should your affairs ever require the nice conduct of one who is both guide and friend to his clients, you will ever find me. Now, Mr. Matthew, Sir, my honoured patron, I await your commands.'

'We are waiting, cousin,' said Matthew, 'for my father. As soon as he arrives Mr. Probus will read the Will. The contents are known to me—in general terms—such was the confidence reposed in me by my honoured uncle—in general terms. I believe you will find that any expectations you may have formed——'

'Pardon me, Sir,' interrupted the attorney. 'Not before the reading of the Will——'

'Will be frustrated. That is all I intended to say. Of course there may be a trifle. Indeed I hope there may prove to be some trifling legacy.

'Perhaps a shilling. Ha, ha!' The attorney looked more forbidding when he became mirthful than when he was serious.

Then some of my cousins arrived and sat down. We waited a few minutes in silence, until the arrival of my uncle the Alderman with his wife and daughters.

The ladies stared at me without any kind of salutation. The Alderman shook his head.

'Nephew,' he said, 'I am sorry to see you here. I fear you will go away with a sorrowful heart——'

'I am sorrowful already, because my father was not reconciled to me. I shall not be any the more sorrowful

to find that I have nothing. It is what I expect. Now, sir, you may read my father's will as soon as you please.'

In spite of my brave words I confess that, for Alice's sake, I did hope that something would be left me.

Then all took chairs and sat down with a cough of expectation. There was no more wailing from the ladies.

Mr. Probus took up from the table a parchment tied with red tape and sealed. He solemnly opened it.

'This,' he said, 'is the last will and testament of Peter Halliday, Knight, and Alderman, late Lord Mayor, Citizen and Loriner.'

My uncle interposed. 'One moment, sir.' Then he turned to me. 'Repentance, nephew, though too late to change a parent's testamentary dispositions, may be quickened by the consequences of a parent's resentment. It may therefore be the means of leading to the forgiveness—ahem—and the remission—ahem—of more painful consequences—ahem—at the hands of Providence.'

I inclined my head. 'Now, sir, once more.'

'This will was made four years ago, when the late Mr. Littleton was the deceased gentleman's attorney. It was opened three months ago in order to add a trifling codicil, which was entrusted to my care. I will now read the will.'

There is no such cumbrous and verbose document in the world as the will of a wealthy man. It was read by Mr. Probus in a harsh voice without stops in a sing-song, monotonous delivery, which composed the senses and made one feel as if all the words in the Dictionary were being read aloud.

At last he finished.

'Perhaps,' I said, 'someone will tell me in plain English what it means?'

'Plain English, Sir? Let me tell you,' Mr. Probus re-

plied, 'that there is no plainer English in the world than that employed by lawyers.'

I turned to my uncle. 'Will you, Sir, have the goodness to explain to me?'

'I cannot recite the whole. As for the main points—Mr. Probus will correct me if I am wrong—my lamented brother leaves bequests to found an almshouse for eight poor men and eight poor widows, to bear his name; he also founds at his Parish Church an annual Lecture, to bear his name: he establishes a New Year's dole, to bear his name, of coals and bread, for twenty widows of the Parish. He has founded a school, for twelve poor boys, to bear his name. He has ordered his executors to effect the release of thirty poor prisoners for debt, in his name. Is there more, Mr. Probus?'

'He also founds a scholarship for a poor and deserving lad, to assist him at Cambridge. The same scholarship to bear his name and to be in the gift of his Company.'

'What does he say about me?'

'I am coming to that,' Mr. Probus replied. 'He devises many bequests to his nephews and nieces, his cousins and his personal friends, with mourning rings to all: there are, I believe, two hundred thus honoured: two hundred—I think, Mr. Paul, that it is a long time since the City lost one so rich and so richly provided with friends.'

'But what does he say about me?' I insisted.

'Patience. He then devises the whole of his remaining estate: all his houses, investments, shares, stocks: all his furniture and plate: to his nephew Matthew.'

'I expected it. And nothing said about me at all.'

'It is estimated that the remainder, after deducting the moneys already disposed of, will not amount to more than £100,000, because there is a reservation——'

'Oh!'

'It is provided that the sum of £100,000 be set aside: that it be placed in the hands of trustees whom he names—the Master of his Company and the Clerk of the Company. This money is to accumulate at compound interest until one of two events shall happen—either the death of his son, in which case Mr. Matthew will have it all: or the death of Mr. Matthew, in which case the son is to have it all. In other words, this vast sum of money with accumulations will go to the survivor of the two.'

I received this intelligence in silence. At first I could not understand what it meant.

'I think, Sir,' Mr. Probus addressed the Alderman, 'we have now set forth the terms of this most important document in plain language. We ought perhaps to warn Mr. William against building any hopes upon the very slender chance of succeeding to this money. We have here'—he indicated Matthew—'health, strength, an abstemious life: on the other hand we have'—he indicated me—'what we see.'

I laughed. At all events I was a more healthy subject, to look at, than my cousin, who this morning looked yellow instead of pale.

'The span of life,' the attorney went on, 'accorded to my justly esteemed client, will probably be that usually assigned to those who honour their parents—say eighty, or even ninety. You, sir, will probably be cut off at forty. I believe that it is the common lot in your class. Above all things, do not build upon the chances of this reversion.'

Suddenly the words I had heard came back to me. What were they? 'We will make him sell his reversion. 'Sell his reversion.' Then the reversion must not be sold.

Mr. Probus went on too long. You may destroy the effect of your words by too much repetition.

'A shadowy chance,' he said, 'a shadowy chance.

'I don't know. Why should not my cousin die before me? Besides, it means that my father in cutting me off would leave a door for restoration.'

'Only an imaginary door, sir—not a real door.'

'A very real door. I shall live as long as I can. My cousin will do as he pleases. Mr. Probus, the "shadowy chance," as you call it, is a chance that is worth a large sum of money if I would sell my reversion.' Mr. Probus started and looked suspicious. 'But I shall not sell it. I shall wait. Matthew might die to-morrow—to-day, even——'

'Fie, Sir—oh, fie!—to desire the death of your cousin! This indeed betokens a bad heart—a bad heart. How dreadful is the passion of envy! How soul-destroying is the thirst for gold!'

I rose. I knew the worst.

'Do not,' Mr. Probus went on, 'give, I entreat you, one thought to the thing. Before your cousin's life lies stretched what I may call a charming landskip with daisies in the grass, and—and—the pretty warblers of the grove. It is a life, I see very plainly, full of goodness, which is Heavenly Wealth, stored up for future use; and of success on Change, which is worldly wealth. Happy is the City which owns the possessor of both!'

The moralist ceased and began to tie up his papers. When his strident voice dropped, the air became musical again, so to speak. However, the harsh voice suited the sham piety.

'Cousin Matthew,' I rose, since there was nothing to keep me longer. 'Could I remember, in your seven-and-twenty years of life, one single generous act or one single worthy sentiment, then I could believe this fustian about the length of days and the Heavenly Wealth. Live as

long as you can. I desire never to see you again, and never to hear from you again. Go your own way and leave me to go mine.'

The whole company rose: they parted right and left to let me pass: as the saying is, they gave me the cold shoulder with a wonderful unanimity. There was a common consent among them that the man who had become a fiddler had disgraced the family. As for Matthew, he made no reply even with looks. He did not, however, present the appearance of joy at this great accession to wealth. Something was on his mind that troubled him.

My uncle the Alderman spoke for the family.

'Nephew,' he said, 'believe me, it is with great sorrow that we see thee thus cast out: yet we cannot but believe the acts of my brother to be righteous. I rejoice not that my son has taken thine inheritance. I lament that thou hast justly been deprived. The will cuts thee off from the family.' He looked round. A murmur of approval greeted him. A disinherited son who is also a fiddler by profession cannot be said to belong to a respectable City family. 'We wish thee well—in thy lower sphere—among thy humble companions. Farewell.' I passed through them all with as much dignity as I could assume. 'Alas! I heard him saying as I stepped out. 'Alas! that cousins should so differ from each other in grain—in grain!'

His daughters, my dear cousins, turned up their noses, coughed and flattened themselves against the wall so that I should not touch so much as a hoop—and I saw these affectionate creatures no more, until—many things had happened.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TEMPTATION.

One morning, about six weeks after the funeral, I was sitting at the harpsichord, pricking out an anthem of my own composition. The theme was one of thanksgiving and praise, and my heart was lifted to the level of the words. All around was peace and tranquillity: on the river bank outside Alice walked up and down carrying our child, now nearly a year and a half old: the boy crowed and laughed: the mother would have been singing, but she would not disturb me at work. Can mortal man desire greater happiness than to have the work of his own choice; the wife who is to him the only woman in the world; a strong and lovely child: and a sufficiency earned by his own work? As for my chance of ever getting that huge fortune by my cousin's death, I can safely aver that I never so much as thought of it. We never spoke of it: we put it out of our minds altogether.

I heard steps outside: steps which disturbed me: I turned my head. It was Mr. Probus, the attorney. He stood hat in hand before Alice.

'Mr. William's wife, I believe,' he was saying. 'And his child? A lovely boy indeed, madam. I bring you news—nothing less in short than a fortune—a fortune—for this lovely boy.'

'Indeed, Sir? Are you a friend of my husband?'

'A better friend, I warrant, Madam, than many who call him friend.'

'He is within, Sir. Will you honour our poor cottage?'

He stood in the open door.

'Mr. Will,' he said, 'I have your permission to enter?'

At sight of him the whole of the anthem vanished: harmony, melody, solo, chorus. It was as if someone was singing false: as if all were singing false. I put down my pen. 'Sir,' I said, 'I know not if there is any business of mine which can concern you.'

'Dear Sir,' he tried to make his grating voice mellifluous: he tried to smile pleasantly. 'Do not, pray, treat me as if I was an adviser of the will by which your father deprived you of your inheritance.'

'I do not say that you were. Nevertheless, I cannot understand what business you have with me.'

'I come from your cousin. You have never, I fear, regarded your cousin with kindly feelings'—this was indeed reversing the position—'but of that we will not speak. I come at the present moment as a messenger of peace—a messenger of peace. There is Scripture in praise of the messenger of peace. I forget it at the moment: but you will know it. Your good lady will certainly know it.' Alice, who had followed him, placed a chair for him and stood beside him. 'I bear the olive-branch like the turtle-dove,' he continued, smiling. 'I bring you good tidings of peace and wealth. They should go together, wealth and peace.'

'Pray, Sir, proceed with your good tidings.'

Alice laid her hand on my shoulder. 'Husband,' she said, 'it would be no good tidings which would deprive us of the happiness which we now enjoy. Think well before you agree to anything that this gentleman, or your cousin, may offer.' So she left us, and carried the boy out again into the fresh air.

'Now, Sir, we are alone.'

He looked about him curiously. 'A pretty room,' he said, 'but small. One would take it for the cottage of a

fisherman. I believe there are some of these people in the neighbourhood. The prospect either over the river or over the marsh is agreeable: the trees are pleasant in the summer. The Dog and Duck, which is, I believe, easily accessible, is a cheerful place, and the company is polite and refined, especially that of the ladies. No one, however, would think that a son of the great Sir Peter Halliday, ex-Lord Mayor and Alderman, West India Merchant, was living in this humble place.'

'Your good tidings, Sir?'

'At the same time the position has its drawbacks. You are almost within the Rules. And though not yourself a prisoner, you are in the company of prisoners.'

'Again, Sir, your good tidings?'

'I come to them. Scelerisque Probus is my motto. Probus, attorney at law, trusted by all. Now, Sir, you shall hear what your cousin proposes. Listen to me for a moment. You can hardly get on, I imagine, even in so small a way as this appears to be, under fifty pounds a year.'

'It would be difficult.'

'And in your profession, improperly hard and unjustly despised, it is difficult, I believe, to make much more.'

'It is difficult to make much more.'

'Ha! As your cousin said: "They must be pinched—this unfortunate couple—pinched at times."'

'Did my cousin say that?'

'Assuredly. He was thinking especially of your good lady, whom he remarked at the funeral. Well, your cousin will change all that. A heart of gold, Mr. William, all pure gold'—I coughed, doubtfully—'concealed, I admit, by a reserved nature which often goes with our best and most truly pious men, especially in the City of London. I do assure you, a heart of gold.'

He played his part badly. His cunning eyes, his harsh voice, the words of praise so out of keeping with his appearance and manner—as if such a man with such a face could be in sympathy with hearts of gold—struck a note of warning. Besides, Matthew with a heart of gold?

'Well, Sir,' I interrupted him, 'what have you come to say?'

'In plain words, then, this. Mr. Matthew has discovered a way of serving you. Now, my dear Sir, I pray your attention.' He leaned back and crossed his legs. 'Your father showed a certain relenting—a disposition to consider you as still a member of the family by that provision as to survival which you doubtless remember.'

'So I interpret that clause in the will.'

'And with this view has put you in as the possible heir to the money which is now accumulating in the hands of trustees. Mr. Matthew, now a partner in the business, will, it is assumed, provide for his heirs out of the business. On his death your father's fortune will come to you if you are living. If you die first it will go to your cousin. In the latter event there will be no question of your son getting aught.'

'So I understand.'

'Your cousin, therefore, argues in this way. First, he is only a year or two older than yourself: next, he is in full possession of his health and strength. There is nothing to prevent his living to eighty: I believe a great-grandmother of his, not yours, lived to ninety-six. It is very likely that he may reach as great an age. You will allow that.'

'Perhaps.'

'Why then, we are agreed. As for you, musicians, I am told, seldom get past forty: they gradually waste away and—and wither like the blasted sprig in July. Oh! you

will certainly leave this world at forty—enviable person!—would that I could have done so!—you will exchange your fiddle for a harp—the superior instrument—and your three-cornered hat for a crown—the external sign of promotion—long before your cousin has even passed the Chair.'

'All this is very likely, Mr. Probus. Yet——'

'I am coming to my proposal. What Mr. Matthew says is this. "My cousin is cut out of the will. It is not for me to dispute my uncle's decision. Still, what he wants just now is ready money—a supplement—a supplement—to what he earns.'

'Well?' For he stopped here and looked about the room with an air of contempt.

'A pleasant room,' he said, going back, 'but is it the room which your father's son should have for a lodging? Rush-bottomed chairs: no carpet . . . dear me, Mr. William, it is well to be a philosopher. However, we shall change all that.'

I waited for him to go on without further interruption.

'In a word, Sir, I am the happy ambassador—privileged if ever there was one—charged to bring about reconciliation and cousinly friendship.' Again he overdid it. 'Your cousin sends me, in a word, to propose that you should sell him your chances of inheritance. That is why I am here. I say, Mr. William, that you may if you please sell him your chance of the inheritance. He proposes to offer you £3,000 down—£3,000, I say—the enormous sum of three—thousand—pounds—for your bare chance of succeeding. Well, Sir? What do you say to this amazing, this astounding piece of generosity?'

I said nothing. Only suddenly there returned to my mind the words I had overheard in the outer counting-house.

'We will make him sell his reversion.'

What connection had these words with me? There was no proof of any connection: no proof except that jumping of the wits which wants no proof.

'With £3,000,' Mr. Probus continued, 'you can take a more convenient residence of your own—here, or elsewhere: near the Dog and Duck, or further removed: you can live where you please: with the interest, which would amount to £150 a year at least, and what you make by your honest labour, you will be, for one of your profession, rich. It will be a noble inheritance for your children. Why, Sir, you are a made man!'

He threw himself back in his chair and puffed his cheeks with the satisfaction that naturally follows on the making of a man.

I was tempted: I saw before me a life of comparative ease: with £150 a year there would be little or no anxiety for the future.

Mr. Probus perceived that I was wavering. He pulled a paper out of his pocket—he slapped it on the table and unrolled it: he looked about for ink and pen.

'You agree?' he asked with an unholy joy lighting up his eyes. 'Why—there—I knew you would! I told Mr. Matthew that you would. Happy man! Three thousand pounds! And all your own! And all for nothing! Where is the ink? Because, Sir—I can be your witness—that cousin of yours, I may now tell you, is stronger than any bull—sign here, then, Sir—here—he will live for ever.'

His eagerness, which he could not conceal, to obtain my signature startled me. Again I remembered the words:

'We will make him sell his reversion.'

'Stop, Mr. Probus,' I said. 'Not so quick, if you please.'

'The Lord my pasture shall prepare,
And lead me with a shepherd's care.'

The Lord—not Mr. Probus. I took the v
varning.

'We shall not want any ink,' I said, 'nor a
Because I shall not sign.'

'Not sign? Not sign? But Mr. William—
—have a care—such an offer is not made every
vill never again receive such an offer.'

'Hark ye, Mr. Probus. By that clause in h
father signified his desire, although he would
for giving up the City—to show that he was
able and that if it be Heaven's will that I shou
y cousin I should then receive his forgiveness
ore be considered as one of the family. Sir,
any offer that you may make, act against n
sh. I am to wait, God knows I desire not th
cousin—I wait: it is my father's sentence up
ll obey my father. He forgives me after
urs—long or short—I know not. He forgi
clau I am not cursed with

More he said, because he was one of those tenacious and obstinate persons who will not take 'No,' for an answer. Besides, as I learned afterwards, he was most deeply concerned in the success of his mission. He passed from the stage of entreaty to that of remonstrance and finally to that of wrath.

'Sir,' he said, 'I perceive that you are one of those crackbrained and conceited persons who will not allow anyone to do them good: you throw away every chance that offers, you stand in your own light, you bring ruin upon your family.'

'Very well,' I said, 'very well indeed.'

'I waste my words upon you.'

'Why then waste more?'

'You are unworthy of the name you bear. You are only fit for the beggarly trade you follow. Well, Sir, when misery and starvation fall upon you and yours, remember what you have thrown away.'

I laughed. His cunning face became twisted with passion.

'Sir,' he said, 'all this talk is beside the mark. There are ways. Do not think that we are without ways and means.' Then he swore a great round oath. 'We shall find a way, somehow, to bring you to reason.'

'Well Mr. *Integer vitæ scelarisque Probus*,' I said. 'If you contemplate rascality you will have to change your motto.'

He smoothed out his face instantly, and repressed the outward signs of wrath. 'Mr. Will,' he said, 'forgive this burst of honest indignation. You will do, of course, what you think fit. Sir, I wish you a return to better sense. I think I may promise you'—he paused and clapped his forefinger to his nose, 'I am sure that I can so far trespass on the forbearance of your cousin as to promise

that this offer shall be kept open for three weeks. Any day within the next three weeks you shall find at my office the paper ready for your signature. After that time the chance will be gone—gone—gone for ever,' he threw the chance across the river with a theatrical gesture and walked away.

What did it mean? Why did Matthew want to buy my share? We might both live for forty years or even more. Neither could touch that money till the other's death. He might desire my early death, in which case all would be his. But to buy my share—it meant that if I died first he would have paid a needless sum of money for it: and that if he died first it would not be in his power to enjoy that wealth. I asked Ramage on the Sunday why Matthew wanted it. He said that merchants sometimes desire credit and that perhaps it would strengthen Matthew if it were known that this great sum of money would be added to his estate whenever either his cousin or he himself should die. And with this explanation I must be content. There was another possibility, but that I learned afterwards.

'We will make him sell his reversion.' What was the meaning of those words? Perhaps they did not apply to me. But I was sure that they did. Like a woman I was certain that they did: and for a woman's reason—which is none.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CLAIM.

You have heard how my old friend David Camlet, musical instrument maker, of Dowgate Street, presented me—or my wife—on our marriage, with a handsome harpsichord. Shortly after my father's death, this good old gentleman

also went the way of all flesh: a melancholy event which I only learned by receiving a letter from Mr. Probus. Imagine, if you can, my amazement when I read the following:

'Sir,

'I have to call your immediate attention to your debt of fifty-five pounds for a harpsichord supplied to you by David Camlet of Dowgate Street, deceased. I shall be obliged if you will without delay discharge this liability to me as attorney for the executors—

'And Remain, Sir,

'Your obedient humble Servant,

'Ezekiel Probus.'

'Why,' said Alice. 'Mr. Camlet gave us the instrument. It was a free gift.'

'It was. If Mr. Probus will acknowledge the fact.'

'Mr. Probus? Is it that man with the harsh voice who talked lies to you?'

'The same. And much I fear, wife, that he means no good by this letter.'

'But Mr. Camlet gave us the harpsichord.'

Had the letter been received from any other person I should have considered it as of no importance; but the thought that it came from Mr. Probus filled me with uneasiness. What had that worthy attorney said? 'There are ways—we shall find a way to bring you to reason.'

'My dear,' said Alice, 'since we have had the instrument for two years without any demand for payment, we ought to be safe. Better go and see the man.'

It was with very little hope that I sallied forth. Not only was this man a personal enemy but he was an attorney. What must be the true nature of that pro-

turned neither to one side nor the other. T
always money: they run down the man who
when they have stripped him naked they leave h
it is in a debtor's prison or in the street:
once stripped they regard him no longer. Oth
revenge for human motives, for wrongs done an
these men know neither revenge nor wrath: t
complain of wrongs: you may kick them: yo
them: it is nothing: they want your money
they will have by one way or another.

I took boat from St. Mary Overies stairs. A
the river a dreadful foreboding of evil seized
perceived suddenly that, somehow or other, M
was personally interested in getting me to sell
sion. How could he be interested? I could
stand. But he was. I remembered the persua
manner: his anxiety to get my signature: l
anifestation of disappointment when I refuse
atthew was now a partner with a large incon
ortune which my father left him. Matthew h
pensive tastes. Why should Mr. Probus be int

in the Prison till you consent to sell your reversion.' At which I resumed my firmness. Never—never—would I yield, whatever an accursed attorney might say or do to me.

Mr. Probus wrote from a house in White Hart Street. It is a small street, mostly inhabited by poulterers, which leads from Warwick Lane to Newgate market: a confined place at best: with the rows of birds dangling on the hooks, not always of the sweetest, and the smell of the meat market close by and the proximity of the shambles, it is a dark and noisome place. The house, which had a silver Pen for its sign, was narrow, and of three stories: none of the windows had been cleaned for a long time, and the door and doorposts wanted paint.

As I stood on the doorstep the words again came back to me, 'We will make him sell his Reversionary interest.'

The door was opened by an old man much bent and bowed with years: his thin legs, his thin arms, his body—all were bent: on his head he wore a small scratch wig: he covered his eyes with his hand on account of the blinding light, yet the court was darkened by the height of the houses above and the dangling birds below.

He received my name and opened the door of the front room. I observed that he opened it a very little way and entered sliding, as if afraid that I should see something. He returned immediately and beckoned me to follow him. He led the way into a small room at the back, not much bigger than a cupboard, which had for furniture a high desk and a high stool placed at a window so begrimed with dirt that nothing could be seen through it.

There was no other furniture. The old man climbed upon his stool with some difficulty and took up his pen. He looked very old and shrivelled: his brown coat was frayed: his worsted stockings were in holes: his shoes

were tied with leather instead of buckles: there was no show of shirt either at the wrist or the throat. He looked, in fact, what he was, a decayed clerk of the kind with which, as a boy, I had been quite familiar. It is a miserable calling, only redeemed from despair—because the wages are never much above starvation-point—by the chance and the hope of winning a prize in the lottery. No clerk is ever so poor that he cannot afford at least a sixteenth share in this annual bid for fortune. I never heard that any clerk within my knowledge had ever won a prize: but the chance was theirs: once a year the chance returns—a chance of fortune without work or desert.

Presently the old man turned round and whispered, 'I know your face. I have seen you before—but I forget where. Are you in trade? Have you got a shop?'

'No. I have no shop.'

'You come from the country? No? A bankrupt, perhaps? No? Going to make him your attorney?' He shook his head with some vehemence and pointed to the door with his pen. 'Fly,' he said. 'There is still time.'

'I am not going to make him or anyone else my attorney.'

'You come to borrow money? If so'—again he pointed to the door with the feathery end of the quill. 'Fly! There is still time.

'Then you owe him money. Young man—there is still time. Buy a stone at the pavior's — spend your last penny upon it; then tie it round your neck and drop into the river. Ah! It is too late—too late.' For just then Mr. Probus rang a bell. 'Follow me, Sir. Follow me. Ah! That paving-stone!'

Mr. Probus sat at a table covered with papers. He did not rise when I appeared, but pointed to a chair.

'You wish to see me, Mr. William,' he began. 'May I ask with what object?'

'I come in reply to your letter, Mr. Probus.'

'My letter? My letter?' He pretended to have forgotten the letter. 'I write so many, and sometimes—ay—ay—surely. The letter about the trifling debt due to the estate of David Camlet Deceased. Yes—yes, I am administering the worthy man's estate. One of many—very many—who have honoured me with their confidence.'

'That letter, Mr. Probus, is the reason why I have called.'

'You are come to discharge your obligation? It is what I expected. You are not looking well, Mr. William. I am sorry to observe marks—are they of privation?—on your face. Your worthy cousin, on the other hand, has a frame of iron. He will live, I verily believe, to ninety.'

'Never mind my cousin, Mr. Probus. He will live as long as the Lord permits.'

'When last I saw you, Sir, you foolishly rejected a most liberal offer. Well: youth is ignorant. We live and learn. Some day, too late, you will be sorry. Now, Sir, for this debt. Fifty-five pounds. Ay. Fifty-five pounds. And my costs, which are trifling.'

'I have come to tell you, Mr. Probus, that your letter was written under a misapprehension.'

'Truly? Under a misapprehension? Of what kind, pray?'

'The harpsichord was a gift made by Mr. David Camlet. I did not buy it.'

Mr. Probus lifted his eyebrows. 'A gift? Really? You have proof, no doubt, of this assertion?'

'Certainly.'

'Well, produce your proofs. If you have proofs, as you say, I shall be the first to withdraw my client's claim.

'Receiving the instrument does not cl
—what else?'

'The fact that Mr. Camlet never a
money.'

'An oversight. Had he, in a wo
instrument for a gift, he would have sa
what other proofs have you?'

I was silent. I had no other proof.

He turned again to the book he had
It was the ledger, and there, in Mr. Ca
writing, firm and square, was an entry:

'To Will Halliday—a Harpsichord, £

In another book was an entry to th
instrument had been delivered.

Of course, I understand now what the o
the entry. He wanted to note the gift an
unfortunately he entered it as if it was a bus

'Well, Sir?' asked Mr. Probus.

I said nothing. My heart felt as heav
indeed in the power of this man.

'There are such things as

fear I might be charged with compounding a felony. But mercy before all things: charity, mercy, and long suffering. These are the things that chiefly nourish the human soul, not guineas.'

I remained still silent, not knowing what to do or to say, and seeing this abyss yawning before me.

'Come, Sir,' he said with changed voice, 'you owe fifty pounds and costs. If it were to myself I would give you time: I would treat you tenderly: but an Attorney must protect his clients. Therefore I must have that money at once.'

'Give me time to consult my friends.' Alas! All my friends could not raise fifty pounds between them.

'You have none. You have lost your friends. Pay me fifty pounds and costs.'

'Let me see the executors. Perhaps they will hear reason.'

'For what purpose? They must have their own. The long and the short of it, Mr. William Halliday, is that you must pay me this money.'

'Man! I have not got so much money in the world.'

He smiled—he could not disguise his satisfaction.

'Then, Mr. William Halliday'—he shut the ledger with a slam—'I fear that my clients must adopt—most unwillingly, I am sure—the measures sanctioned by the law.' His eyes gleamed with a malicious satisfaction. 'I only trust that the steps we shall have to take will not disturb the mind of my much-respected client, your cousin. You will have to choose your prison, and you will remain in the—the Paradise of your choice until this money, with costs, is paid. As for your choice, the situation of the Fleet is more central: that of the Bench is more rural: beyond the new Prison there are green fields. The smell of the hay perhaps comes over the wall. Should you find a lengthened residence necessary, I believe

that the rooms, though small, are comfortable. Ah! how useful would have been that three thousand pounds which you refused—at such a juncture as this.'

'If there is nothing more to be said——' I got up, not knowing what I said, and bewildered with the prospect before me.

'Heaven forbid, Sir,' he continued sweetly, 'that I should press you unduly. I will even, considering the tender heart of your cousin, extend to you the term. I will grant you twenty-four hours in which to find the money.'

'You may as well give me five minutes. I have no means of raising the sum.'

'I am sorry to hear that, for the sake of my clients. However, I can only hope'—he pushed back the papers and rose with a horrible grin of malice on his face—'that you will find the air of the Prison salubrious. There have been cases of infectious fever—gaol fever, lately: perhaps the King's Bench and the Fleet are equal in this respect. Small-pox, also, is prevalent in one: but I forget which. Many persons live for years in a Prison. I hope, I am sure, that you will pass—many—many—happy years in that seclusion.'

I listened to none of this ill-omened croaking, but hastened to leave him. At the door I passed the old clerk.

'Go to the King's Bench,' he whispered. 'Not to the Fleet, where he'll call every day to learn whether you are dead. There is still time,' he pointed to his throat while he noisily opened the door. 'Round the neck. At the bottom of the River: the lying is more comfortable than in the King's Bench.'

I had entered the house with very little hope. I left it with despair. I walked home as one in a dream, running against people, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. When I reached home I sat down in a kind of stupor.

'My dear,' I said, presently recovering, 'we are lost—we are ruined. I shall starve in a Prison. Thou wilt beg thy bread. The boy will be a gutter brat.'

'Tell me.' Alice took my hand. 'Oh! tell me all—my dear. Can we be lost if we are together?'

'We shall not be together. To-morrow I shall be in the Prison. For how long God only knows.'

'Since *He* knows, my dear, keep up your heart. When was the righteous man forsaken? Come, let us talk. There may be some means found. If we were to pay—though we owe nothing—so much a week.'

'Alice, it is not the debt. There is no debt. It is revenge, and the hope——'

I did not finish—what I would have added was, 'The hope that I may die of gaol fever or something.' 'My dear, be brave and let us arrange. First, I lose my situation in the Church and at the Gardens. Next, we must provide for the child and for thyself outside the prison. No, my dear, if the Lord permits us to live any other way the child shall not be brought up a prison bird.'

CHAPTER X.

THE ARREST.

In this distress I again consulted Tom, who knew already the whole case.

'In my opinion, Will,' he said, 'the best thing for you is to run away. Let Alice and the boy come here. Run away.'

'Whither could I run?'

'Go for a few days into hiding. They will come here in search of you. Cross the river—seek a lodging some-

where about Aldgate, which is on the other side of the river. They will not look for you there. Meantime I shall inquire.—Oh! I shall hear of something to carry on with for a time. You might travel with a show. Probus does not go to country fairs. Or you might go to Dublin or to York, or to Bath, and play in the orchestra of the theatre. We will settle for you afterwards—what to do. Meantime pack thy things and take boat down the river.'

This seemed good advice. I promised I would think of it and perhaps act upon it. Some might think it cowardly to run away: but if an enemy plays dishonest tricks and underhand practices, there is no better way, perhaps, than to run away.

Now had I been acquainted with these tricks I should have remained where I was, in Tom's house, where no sheriff's officer could serve me with a writ. I should have remained there, I say, until midnight, when I could safely attempt the flight. Unfortunately I thought there was plenty of time: I would go home and discuss the matter with Alice. I left the house, therefore, and proceeded across the fields without any fear or suspicion. As I approached the Bank, I saw two fellows waiting about. Still I had no suspicion, and without the least attempt to escape or to avoid them I fell into the clutches of my enemy.

'Mr. William Halliday?' said one, stepping forward and tapping my shoulder. 'You are my prisoner, Sir, at the suit of Mr. Ezekiel Probus, for the debt of fifty-five pounds and costs.'

As I made no resistance, the fellows were fairly civil. I was to be taken, it appeared, first to the Borough Compter. They advised me to leave all my necessaries behind and to have them sent on to the King's Bench as soon as I should be removed there.

And so I took leave of my poor Alice and was marched off to the prison where they take debtors first before they are removed to the larger prison.

The Borough Compter is surely the most loathsome, fetid, narrow place that was ever used for a prison. Criminals and Debtors are confined together: rogues and innocent girls: the most depraved and the most virtuous: there is a yard for exercise which is only about twenty feet square for fifty prisoners: at night the men are turned into a room where they have to lie edgeways for want of space: there is no ventilation, and the air in the morning is more horrible than I can describe. My heart aches when I think of the cruelty of that place: it is a cruel place, because no one ever visits it, no righteous Justice of the Peace, no godly clergyman: there is no one to restrain the warder: and he goes on in the same way, not because he is cruel by nature, but because he is hardened by daily use and custom.

I stayed in that terrible place for two nights, paying dues and garnish most exorbitant. At the end of that time I was informed that I could be removed to the King's Bench at once. So I was taken to the Court and my business was quickly despatched. As a fine for being poor, I had to pay dues which ought not to be demanded of any prisoner for debt—at least we ought to assume that a debtor wants all the money he has for his maintenance. Thus, the Marshal demanded four shillings and sixpence on admission: the turnkey eighteen-pence: the Deputy Marshal a shilling: the Clerk of the Papers, a shilling: four tipstaffs ten shillings between them: and the tipstaff for bringing the prisoner from the Court, six shillings.

These dues paid, I was assigned a room, on the ground-floor of the Great Building (it was shared with another), and my imprisonment began. It was Matthew's revenge

and Mr. Probus's first plan of reduction to submission. But I did not submit.

Thus I was trapped by the cunning of a man whom I believe to have been veritably possessed of a Devil. That there are such men we know very well from Holy Writ: their signs are a wickedness which shrinks from nothing: a pitiless nature: a constant desire for things of this world: and lastly, as happens always to such men, the transformation of what they desire, when they do get it, into dust and ashes; or its vanishing quite away never to be seen, touched, or enjoyed any more. These signs were all visible in the history of Mr. Probus, as you shall hear. Possessed, beyond a doubt, by a foul fiend, was this man whom then I had every reason to hate and fear. Now, I cannot but feel a mingled terror and pity when exemplary punishment overtakes and overwhelms one who commits crimes which make even the convicts in the condemned cell to shake and shudder. His end was horrible and terrible, but it was a fitting end to such a life.

Tom Shirley came, with Alice, to visit me in my new lodging.

He looked about him cheerfully. 'The new place,' he said, 'is more airy and spacious than the old prison on the other side of the road, where I spent a year or two. This is quite a handsome court: the Building is a Palace: the Recreation ground is a Park, but without trees or grass: the three passages painted green remind me somehow of Spring Gardens: the numbers of people make me think of Cheapside or Ludgate Hill: the shops, no doubt, contain every luxury: the society, if mixed, is harmonious. . . .'

'In a word, Tom, I am very lucky to get here.'

'There might be worse places. And hark ye, lad, if there is not another fiddler in the Bench, you will make

in a week twice as much in the Prison as you can make out of it. Nothing cheers a prisoner more than the strains of a fiddle.'

This gave me hope. I began to see that I might live, even in this place.

'There are one or two objections to the place,' this optimist philosopher went on. 'I have observed, for instance, a certain languor which steals over mind and body in a Prison. Some have compared it with the growth they call mildew. Have a care, Will. Practise daily. I have known a musician leave this place fit for nothing but to play for Jack in the Green. Look at the people as they pass. Yonder pretty fellow is too lazy to get his stockings darned: that fellow slouching after him cannot stoop to pull up his stockings: that other thrusts his feet into his slippers without pulling up the heels: there goes one who has worn, I warrant you, his morning gown all day for years: he cannot even get the elbows darned: keep up thy heart, lad. Before long we will get thee into the Rules.'

He visited my room. 'Ha!' he said, 'neat, clean, commodious. With a fine view of the Parade; with life and activity before one's eyes.' He forgot that he had just remarked on the languor and the mildew of the Prison. 'Observe the racquet players: there are finer players here than anywhere else, I believe. And those who do not play at racquets may find recreation at fives: and those who are not active enough for fives may choose to play at Bumble Puppy. Well, Will, Alice will come back to me, with the boy. She can come here every morning if you wish. Patience, lad, patience. We will get thee, before long, within the Rules.'

It is possible, by the Warder's permission, to go into the Rules. But the prisoner must pay down £10 for the first

£100 of his debts, and £5 for every subsequent £100. Now I had not ten shillings in the world. When I look back upon the memory of that time: when I think of the treatment of prisoners: and of the conduct of the prison: and when I reflect that nothing is altered at the present day, I am amazed at the wonderful apathy of people as regards the sufferings of others—it may become at any time their own case: at their carelessness as concerns injustice and oppression—yet subject every one to the same oppression and cruelty.

What, for instance, is more monstrous than the fact that a man who has been arrested by writ, has to pay fees to the prison for every separate writ? If he has no money he is still held liable, so that even if his friends are willing to pay his debts with the exorbitant costs of the attorney, there are still the fees to be paid. And even if the prisoner's friends are willing to release him there is still the warden who must be satisfied before he suffers his prisoner to go.

Again, what can be more iniquitous than the license allowed to attorneys in the matter of their costs? Many a prisoner, originally arrested for a debt of four or five pounds or even less, finds after a while that the attorney's costs amount to twenty or thirty pounds more. He might be able to discharge the debt alone: the costs make it impossible: the creditor might let him go: the attorney will never let him go: the friends might club together to pay the debt: they cannot pay the costs: the attorney abates nothing, hoping that compassion will induce the man's friends to release him. In some cases they do: in others, the attorney finds that he has overreached himself and that the prisoner dies of that incurable disease which we call captivity.

At first sight the Parade and the open court of the

Prison present an appearance of animation. The men playing racquets have a little crowd gathered round them, there are others playing skittles: children run about shouting: there are the shrill voices of women quarrelling or arguing: the crowd is always moving about: there are men at tables smoking and drinking: the tapsters run about with bottles of wine and jugs of beer. There are women admitted to see their friends, husbands and brothers, and to bring them gifts. Alas! when I remember—the sight comes back to me in dreams—the sadness and the earnestness in their faces and the compassion and the love—the woman's love which endures all and survives all and conquers all—I wish that I had the purse of Crœsus to set these captives free, even though it would enrich the attorney, whose wiles have brought them to this place.

One has not to look long before the misery of it is too plainly apparent above the show of cheerful carelessness. One sees the wives of the prisoners: their husbands play racquets, and drink about, and of an evening sit in the tavern bawling songs; the poor women, ragged and draggled, come forth carrying their babes to get a little air: their faces are stamped with the traces of days and weeks and years of privation. The Prison has destroyed the husband's sense of duty to his wife: he will not, if he can, work for his family; he lives upon such doles as he can extract from his family or hers. Worse still, men lose their sense of shame: they say what they please and care not who hears: they introduce companions and care not what is said or thought about them: things are said openly that no Christian should hear: things are done openly that no Christian should witness or should know. There are many hundreds of children within these accursed walls. God help them, if they understand what they hear and what they see!

In the prison there are many kinds of debtors: there is the debtor who is always angry at the undeserved misery of his lot: sometimes his wrongs drive him mad in earnest: then the poor wretch is removed to Bedlam, where he remains until his death. There is, next, the despairing debtor who sits as one in a dream and will never be comforted. There is the philosophical debtor who accepts his fate and makes the best of it: there is the meek and miserable debtor—generally some small tradesman who has been taught that the greatest disgrace possible is that which has actually fallen upon him; there is the debtor who affects the Beau and carries his snuff-box with an air. There is the debtor who was a gentleman and can tell of balls at St. James's; there is the ruffler who swaggers on the Parade, looking out for new-comers and inviting those who have money to play with him. As for the women they are like the men: there are the wives of the prisoners who fall, for the most part, into a draggled condition like their husbands; there are ladies who put on sumptuous array and flaunt it daily on the Parade: stories are whispered about them; there are others about whom it is unnecessary to tell stories; in a word it is a place where the same wickedness goes on as one may find outside.

There is a chapel in the middle of the great Building. Service is held once a week but the attendance is thin; there is a taproom which is crowded all day long: here men sit over their cups from morning till evening; there is a coffee-room where tea and coffee can be procured and where the newspapers are read; this is a great place for the politicians, of whom there are many in the Prison. Indeed, I know not where politics are so eagerly debated as in the King's Bench.

The King's Bench Prison is a wonderful place for the observation of Fortune and her caprices. There was a

society—call it not a club—consisting entirely of gentlemen who had been born to good estates and had suffered ruin through no fault of their own. These gentlemen admitted me to their company. We dined together at the Ordinary and conversed after dinner. One of them, born to an easy fortune, was ruined by the discovery of a parchment entitling him to another estate. There was a lawsuit lasting for twenty years. He then lost it and found that the whole of his own estate had gone too. Another, a gentleman of large estate, married an heiress. Her extravagances ran through both her own fortune and her husband's. She lived with him in the Prison and daily, being now a shrew as well as a slattern, reproached him with the ruin she herself had caused. There was a young fellow who had fallen among lawyers and been ruined by them. He now studied law, intending as soon as he got out to commence attorney and to practise the tricks and rogueries he had learned from his former friends. Another had bought a seat in the House of Commons and a place with it. But at the next election he lost his seat and his place, too. And another was a great scholar in Arabic. His captivity affected him not one whit because he had his books and could work in the Prison as well as out.

With such companions, I endeavoured to keep aloof from the drinking and roystering crew which made the Prison disorderly and noisy. Yet, as I will show you directly, I was the nightly servant of the roysterers.

You have heard of Tom Shirley's judgment that in every debtors' prison the collegians, if they do not, as many do, go about in filthy rags and tatters, are all slatterns: some can afford to dress with decency and cleanliness, not to speak of fashion, which would be, indeed, out of place in the King's Bench; even those care not to observe the customs of the outside world; the

ruffles are no longer white or no longer visible; the waistcoat is unbuttoned; the coat is powdered; the wig is uncurled; those who wear their own hair leave it hanging over the ears instead of tying it neatly with a black ribbon behind. This general neglect of dress corresponds with the universal neglect of morals which prevails throughout the Prison. Everything conspires to drag down and to degrade the unfortunate prisoner: the hopelessness of his lot; the persecution of his enemies; the uncertainty about the daily bread; the freedom with which drink is offered about by those who 'coll it,' *i.e.*, in the language of the place who have money; the temptation to do as others do and forget his sorrows over a bowl of punch; speedily contaminate the prisoner and make him in all respects like unto those around him. I have said already that if it is bad for men it is worse for women. Let me draw a veil over this side of the King's Bench. Suffice it to say that one who has written on the Prisons has declared that if Diana herself and her nymphs were to be imprisoned for twelve months in the King's Bench, at the end of that time they would all be fit companions for Messalina.

It is not only from their rags that the poverty of the prisoners is betrayed; one may learn from their hollow cheeks, their eager eyes, their feeble gait, that many—too many—are suffering from want of food. It is true that the law of the land gives to every prisoner a groat—fourpence a day—to be paid by the detaining creditor: yet the groat is not always paid, and can only be obtained if the creditor refuses it by legal steps, which a man destitute of money cannot take. What attorney will take up the case of a man without a farthing? If the debtor wins his case how is he to pay the attorney any costs out of fourpence a day? If he wishes to plead *in formâ pauperis*, the law allows the warder to charge six shillings and eight-

pence for leave to go to the Court and half a crown for the turnkey to take him there—what prisoner on the poor side can pay these fees? So that when a prisoner is really poor he cannot get his groats at all, for the creditor will not pay them unless he is obliged. Again, there are other ways of evading the law. If a debtor surrenders in June there is no Court till November and the creditor need not pay anything till the order of the Court is issued. There are a few doles and charities; but these amount to no more than about £100 a year, say, two pounds a week or six shillings a day. Now there are 600 prisoners as a rule. How many of these are on the poor side? And how far will six shillings a day go among these starving wretches? There are also the boxes into which a few shillings a day are dropped. But how far will these go among so many? It is within my certain knowledge that many would die of sheer starvation every week were it not for the kindness of those but one step above them.

If, for instance, one would understand what poverty may mean he must visit the Common side of the King's Bench Prison. Those who have visited the courts and narrow lanes of Wapping report terrible stories of rags and filth, but the people, by hook or by crook, get food. In the Prison there is neither hook nor crook: the prisoner, unless he knows a trade which may be useful in that place: unless he can repair shoes and clothes: unless he can shave and dress the hair, cannot earn a penny. Look at these poor wretches, slinking about the courts, hoping to attract the compassion of some visitor; see them uncombed, unwashed, unshaven; their long hair hanging over their ears; a horrid bristling beard upon their chin; their faces wan with insufficient food, their eyes eagerly glancing here and there to catch a look of pity, a dole or a loan. If you follow them to the misery of the Common side

where they are thrust at night you will see creatures more wretched still. These can go abroad even though skewers take the place of buttons; these have shoes—which once had toes; these have beds, of a kind; there are others who have no beds, but lie on the floor; who have no blankets and never take off their rags; who go barefooted and bare-headed. Remember that their life-long imprisonment was imposed upon them because they could not pay a debt of a pound or two. Their pound or two, by reason of the attorney's costs and the warden's fees, has grown and swelled till it has reached the amount of £20 or £40 or anything you will. No one can release them; the only thing to be hoped is that cold and starvation may speedily bring them to the end—the long sleep in the graveyard of St. George's Church.

I speedily found that I could manage to live pretty well by means of my fiddle. Almost every evening there was some drinking party which engaged my services. I played for them the old tunes to which they sang their songs about wine and women—bawling them at the top of their voices; they paid me as much as I could expect. By good luck there was no other fiddler in the place; a harpist there was; and a flute-player; we sometimes agreed together to give a concert in the coffee-room.

I continued this life for about six months, making enough money every week to pay my way at the Ordinary. Perhaps—I know not—the prison was already beginning to work its way with me and to reduce me, as Tom Shirley said, to the condition of a fiddler to Jack in the Green.

I had a visit, after some three months, from Mr. Probus. He came one day into the prison. I saw him standing on the pavement looking round him. Some of the collegians knew him: they whispered and looked at him with the face that means death if that were possible. One man stepped

forward and cursed him. 'Dog!' he said, 'if I had you outside this accursed place, I would make an end of you.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Probus, at whose heels marched a turnkey, 'you do me an injustice for which you will one day be sorry. Am I your detaining creditor?'

The man cursed him again, I know not why, and turned on his heel.

Then I stepped forward. 'Did you come here to gloat over your work, Mr. Probus?'

'Mr. William? I hope you are well, Sir. The prison air, I find, is fresh from the fields. You look better than I expected. To be sure it is early days. You are only just beginning.'

'You will be sorry to hear that I am very well.'

'I would have speech in a retired place, Mr. William.'

'You want once more to dangle your bribe before me. I understand, sir, very well, what you would say.'

'Then let me say it here. Your cousin, I may say, deplores deeply this new disgrace to the family. He earnestly desires to remove it. I am again empowered to purchase an imaginary reversion. Mr. William, he will now make it £4,000. Will that content you?'

'Nothing will content me. There is some secret reason for this persecution. You want—you—not my cousin—to get access to this great sum of money. Well, Mr. Probus, my opinion is that my cousin will die before me. And since I am firmly persuaded upon that point, and since I believe that you think so too, my answer is the same as before.'

'Then,' he said, 'stay here and rot.' He looked round the prison. 'It is a pleasant place for a young man to spend his days, is it not? All his days—till an attack of gaol fever or small-pox visits the place. Eh? Eh? Eh? Then you will be sorry.'

'I shall never be sorry, Mr. Probus, to have frustrated any plots and designs of yours. Be assured of that—and for the rest, do your worst.'

He slowly walked away without a word. But all the devil in his soul flared in his eyes as he turned.

'You do wrong,' said the turnkey who had accompanied him. 'Tis the keenest of his kind. Not another attorney in all London has brought us, not to speak of the Fleet and Newgate, more prisoners than Mr. Probus. For hunting up detainers and running up the costs he has no equal.'

'He is my detaining creditor,' I said.

The turnkey shrugged his shoulders.

'Young gentleman,' he said, 'I see that you are a gentleman, although you are a fiddler — take advice. Agree with his terms quickly, whatever they are. He made you an offer—take it, before he lands you in another court with new writs and more costs.'

In fact, the very next day, I heard that there was another writ in the name of one John Merridew, Sheriff's officer, for fifty pounds alleged to have been lent to me by him. As for Mr. John Merridew, I knew not even the name of the man, and I had never borrowed sixpence of anyone.

I showed the writ to my friend the turnkey. He read it with admiration.

'I told you so,' he said, 'what a man he is! And Merridew, too — Merridew! And you never borrowed the money, and never saw the man! What a man! What a man! Merridew, too, under his thumb! There's ability for you! There's resource!'

I murmured something not complimentary. Indeed, I knew nothing, at that time, of Merridew.

'Ah! He means to keep you here till you accept his

offer. Better take it now, then he'll let you go for his costs. He won't give up his costs. What a man it is! And you've never set eyes on John Merridew, have you? What a man! He knows John Merridew, you see. Why, between them——' He looked at me meaningly, and laid his hand upon my shoulder. 'Take my advice, Sir. Take my advice, and accept that offer of his. Else—I don't say, mind, but Merridew—Merridew——' He placed his thumb upon the left side of my neck, and pressed it. 'Many—many—have gone that way—through Merridew. And Probus rules Merridew.'

PART II.

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE.

CHAPTER I.

RELEASE.

You have read how a certain lady came to the Prison: how she spoke with two prisoners of the baser sort in a manner familiar and yet scornful: and how she addressed me and appeared moved and astonished on hearing my name. I thought little more about her, save as an agreeable vision in the midst of the rags and sordidness of the Prison, now growing daily—alas!—more familiar and less repulsive. For this is the way in the King's Bench.

She came, however, a second time, and this time she came to visit me. It was in the morning. Alice was in my room; with her the boy, now in his second year, so strong that he could not be kept from pulling himself up by the help of a chair. She was showing me his ways and his tricks, rejoicing in the wilfulness and the strength of the child. I was watching and listening, my pride and happiness in the boy dashed by the thought that he must grow up to be ashamed of his father as a prison bird. Prison has no greater sting than the thought of your children's shame. For the time went on and day after day only made release appear more impossible. How could I

get out who had no friends and could save no money? I had now been in prison for nearly a year: I began to look for nothing more than to remain there for all my life.

While I was looking at the boy and sadly thinking of these things, I heard a quick, light step outside, followed by a gentle tap at the door. And lo! there entered the lady who had spoken with those two sons of Belial and with me.

'I said I would come again.' She smiled, and it was as if the sunshine poured into the room. She gave me her hand and it was like a hand dragging me out of the Slough of Despond. 'Your room,' she said, 'is not so bad, considering the place. This lady is your wife? Madam, your most respectful.'

So she curtseyed low and Alice did the like. Then she saw the child.

'Oh!' she cried. 'The pretty boy! The lovely boy!' She snatched him and tossed him, crowing and laughing, and covered him with kisses. 'Oh! The light, soft, silky hair!' she cried. 'Oh! the sweet blue eyes! Oh! the pretty face. Master Will Halliday, you are to be envied even in this place. Your cousin Matthew hath no such blessing as this.'

'Matthew is not even married.'

'Indeed? Perhaps, if he is, this, as well as other blessings, has been denied him,' she replied, with a little change in her face as if a cloud had suddenly fallen. But it quickly passed.

I could observe that Alice regarded her visitor with admiration and curiosity. This was a kind of woman unknown to my girl, who knew nothing of the world or of fine ladies: they were outside her own experience. The two women wore a strange contrast to each other. Alice with her serious air of meditation, and her grave eyes,

might have sat to a painter for the Spirit of Music, or for St. Cecilia herself: or indeed for any saint, or muse, or heathen goddess who must show in her face a heavenly sweetness of thought, with holy meditation. All the purity and tenderness of religion lay always in the face of Alice. Our visitor, on the other hand, would have sat more fitly for the Queen of Love, or the Spirit of Earthly Love. Truly she was more beautiful than any other woman whom I have ever seen, or imagined. I thought her beautiful on the stage, but then her face was covered with the crimson paint by which actresses have to spoil their cheeks. Off the stage, it was the beauty of Venus herself: a beauty which invited love: a beauty altogether soft: in every point soft and sweet and caressing: eyes that were limpid and soft: a blooming cheek which needed no paint, which was as soft as velvet and as delicately coloured as a peach: lips smiling, rosy red and soft: her hands: her voice: her laugh: everything about this heavenly creature, I say, invited and compelled and created love.

You think that as one already sworn to love and comfort another woman, I speak with reprehensible praise. Well, I have already confessed—it is not a confession of shame—that I loved her from the very first: from the time when she spoke to me first. I am not ashamed of loving her: Alice knows that I have always loved her: you shall hear, presently, why I need not be ashamed and why I loved her, if I may say so, as a sister. It is possible to love a woman without thoughts of earthly love: to admire her loveliness: to respect her: to worship her: yet not as an earthly lover. Such love as Petrarch felt for Laura I felt for this sweet and lovely woman.

She gave back the child to his mother. 'Mr. Will Halliday,' she said. 'It is not only for the child that thou art blessed above other men'—looking so intently

upon Alice that the poor girl blushed and was confused. 'Sure,' she said, 'it is a face which I have seen in a picture.'

She was a witch: she drew all hearts to her: yet not, like Circe, to their ruin and undoing. And if she was soft and kind of speech, she was also generous of heart. She was always, as I was afterwards to find out, helping others. How she helped me you shall hear. Meantime I must not forget that her face showed a most remarkable virginal innocence. It seemed natural to her face: a part of it, that it should proclaim a perfect maidenly innocence of soul. I know that many things have been said about her; for my own part I care to know nothing more about her than she herself has been pleased to tell me. I choose to believe that the innocence in her face proclaimed the innocence of her life. And, with this innocence, a face which was always changing with every mood that crossed her mind: moved by every touch of passion: sensitive as an Æolian harp to every breath of wind.

She sat down on the bed. 'I told you that I would come again,' she said. 'Do not take me for a curious and meddlesome person. Madam,' she turned to Alice, 'I come because I know something about your husband's cousin, Matthew. If you will favour me, I should like to know the meaning of this imprisonment, and what Matthew has to do with it.'

So I told the whole story: the clause in my father's will: the attempt made to persuade me to sell my chance of the succession: the threats used by Mr. Probus: the alleged debt for the harpsichord: and the alleged debt to one John Merridew.

She heard the whole patiently. Then she nodded her head.

'Probus I know, though he does not, happily, know me. Of the man Merridew also I know something. He is a

sheriff's officer by trade; but he has more trades than one. Probus is an attorney; but he, too, has more trades than one. My friends, this is the work of Probus. I see Probus in it from the beginning. I conjecture that Merridew, for some consideration, has borrowed money from Probus more than he can repay. Therefore, he has to do whatever Probus orders.'

'Mr. Probus is Matthew's attorney.'

'Yes. An attorney does not commit crimes for his client, unless he is well paid for it. I do not know what it means except that Matthew wants money, which does not surprise me——'

'Matthew is a partner in the House of Halliday Brothers. He has beside a large fortune which should have been mine.'

'Yet Matthew may want money. I am not a lawyer, but I suppose that if you sell your chance to him, he can raise money on the succession.'

'I suppose so.'

'Probus must want money too. Else he would not have committed the crime of imprisoning you on a false charge of debt. Well, we need not waste time in asking why. The question is, first of all, how to get you out.'

Alice clutched her little one to her heart and her colour vanished, by which I understood the longing that was in her.

'To get me out? Madam; I have no friends in the world who could raise ten pounds.'

'Nevertheless, Mr. Will, a body may ask how much is wanted to get you out.'

'There is the alleged debt for the harpsichord of fifty-five pounds: there is also the alleged debt due to Mr. John Merridew of fifty pounds: there are the costs: and there are the fines or garnish without which one cannot leave the place.'

'Say, perhaps, in all, a hundred and fifty pounds. It is not much. I think I can find a man'—she laughed—'who, out of his singular love to you, will give the money to take you out.'

'You know a man? Madame, I protest—there is no one, in the whole world—who would do such a thing.'

'Yet, if I assure you——'

'Oh! Madame! Will!' Alice fell on her knees and clasped her hand. 'See! It is herself! herself!'

'But why?—why?' I asked, incredulous.

'Because she is all goodness,' Alice cried, the tears rolling down her face.

'All goodness!' Madame laughed. 'Yes, I am indeed all goodness. Get up, dear woman. And go on thinking that, if you can. All goodness!' And she laughed scornfully. 'A hundred and fifty pounds,' she repeated. 'Yes, I think I know where to get this money.'

'Are we dreaming?' I asked.

'But, Will,' she became very serious, 'I must be plain with you. It is certain to me that the man Probus has got some hold over your cousin. Otherwise he would not be so impatient for you to sell your reversion. Some day I will show you why I think this. Learn, moreover, that the man Probus is a man of one passion only. He wants money: he wants nothing else: it is his only desire to get money. If anybody interferes with his money getting, he will grind that man to powder. You have interfered with him: he has thrust you into prison. Do not believe that when you are out he will cease to persecute you.'

'What am I to do, then?'

'If you come to terms with him he will at once cease his persecution.'

'Come to terms with him?'

'His terms must mean a great sum of money for him-

self, not for you—or for your cousin. Else he would not be so eager.'

'I can never accept his terms,' I said.

'He will go on, then. If it is a very large sum of money he will stick at nothing.'

'Then what am I to do?'

'Keep out of his way. For, believe me, there is nothing that he will not attempt to get you once more in his power. Consider: he puts you in here, knowing that you are penniless. He calculates that the time will come when you will be so broken by imprisonment that you will be ready to make any terms. Nay—he thinks that the prison air will kill you.'

'The Lord will protect us,' said Alice.

Madame looked up with surprise. 'They say that on the stage,' she said. 'What does it mean?'

'It means that we are all in the hands of the Lord. Without His will not even a sparrow falleth to the ground.'

Madame shook her head. 'At least,' she said, 'we must do what we can to protect ourselves.' She rose. 'I am going now to get that money. You shall hear from me in a day or two. Perhaps it may take a week before you are finally released. But keep up your hearts.'

She took the child again and kissed him. Then she gave him back to his mother.

'You are a good woman,' she said. 'Your face is good: your voice is good: what you say is good. But, remember. Add to what you call the protection of the Lord a few precautions. To stand between such an one as Probus and the money that he is hunting is like standing between a tigress and her prey. He will have no mercy: there is no wickedness that he will hesitate to devise: what he will

do next, I know not, but it will be something that belongs to his master, the Devil.'

'The Lord will protect us,' Alice repeated, laying her hand on the flaxen hair of her child.

We stared at each other, when she was gone. 'Will,' asked Alice, with suffused eyes and dropping voice, 'is she an angel from Heaven?'

'An angel, doubtless—but not from Heaven—yet. My dear, it is the actress who charmed us when we went to the Play—on our wedding-day. It is Miss Jenny Wilmot herself.'

'Oh! If all actresses are like her! Yet they say—— Will, she shall have, at least, our prayers——'

Three or four days later—the time seemed many years—an attorney came to see me. Not such an attorney as Mr. Probus: a gentleman of open countenance and pleasant manners. He came to tell me that my business was done, and that after certain dues were paid—which were provided for—I could walk out of the prison.

'Sir,' I said, 'I beg you to convey to Miss Jenny Wilmot, my benefactress, my heartfelt gratitude.'

'I will, Mr. Halliday. I perceive that you know her name. Let me beg you not to wait upon her in person. To be sure, she has left Drury Lane and you do not know her present address. It is enough that she has been able to benefit you, and that you have sent her a becoming message of gratitude. But, Sir, one word of caution. She bids you remember that you have an implacable enemy. Take care, therefore, take care.'

CHAPTER II.

HOW I GOT A NEW PLACE.

So I was free. For twenty-four hours I was like a boy on the first day of his holidays. I exulted in my liberty: I ran about the meadows and along the Embankment: I got into a boat and rowed up and down the river. But when the first rapture of freedom was spent I remembered that free or within stone walls, I had still to earn a living. I had but one way: I must find a place in an Orchestra. At the Dog and Duck, where my brother-in-law still led, there was no place for me.

There are, however, a great many taverns with gardens and dancing and singing places and bands of music. I set off to find one where they wanted a fiddle. I went, I believe, the whole round of them—from the Temple of Flora to the White Conduit House, and from Bermondsey Spa to the Assembly Rooms at Hampstead. Had all the world turned fiddler? Everywhere the same reply—'No vacancy.' Meantime we were living on the bounty of my brother-in-law, whose earnings were scanty for his own modest house.

Then I thought of the organ. Of course my place at St. George's Borough was filled up. There are about a hundred churches in London, however: most of them have organs. I tried every one: and always with the same result: the place was filled. I thought of my old trade of fiddling to the sailors. Would you believe it? There was not even a tavern parlour where they wanted a fiddle to make the sailors dance and drink. Had Mr. Probus been able to keep me out of everything?

Alice did her best to sustain my courage. She preserved a cheerful countenance: she brushed my coat and hat in the morning with a word of encouragement: she welcomed me home when I returned footsore and with an aching heart. Why, even in the far darker time that presently followed she preserved the outward form of cheerfulness and the inner heart of faith.

The weeks passed on: my bad luck remained: I could hear of no work, not even temporary work: I began to think that even the Prison where I could at least earn my two or three shillings a day was better than freedom: I began also to think that Mr. Probus must have all the orchestras and music-galleries in his own power, together with all the churches that had organs. My shoes wore out and could not be replaced: my appearance was such as might be expected when for most of the time I had nothing between bread and cheese and beer for breakfast, and bread and cheese and beer for supper. And I think that the miserable figure I presented was often the cause of a rejection.

Chance—say Providence—helped me. I was walking, sadly enough, by Charing Cross, one afternoon, being weary, hungry, and dejected, when I heard a voice cry out, 'Will Halliday! Will Halliday! Are you deaf?'

I turned round. It was Madame, my benefactress, my patroness. She was in a hackney coach.

'Come in,' she cried, stopping her driver. 'Come in with me.'

I obeyed, nothing loath.

'Why,' she said looking at me. 'What is the matter? Your cheeks are hollow: your face is pale: your limbs are shaking: worse still—you are shabby. What has happened?'

I could make no reply.

'Your sweet wife—and the lovely boy. They are well?'

When a man has been living for many weeks on insufficient food: when he has been turned away at every application, he may be forgiven if he loses, on small provocation, his self control. I am not ashamed to say that her kind words and her kind looks were too much for me in my weak condition. I burst into tears.

She laid her hand on my arm. 'Will,' she said, as if she were a sister, 'you shall tell me all—but you shall go home with me and we will talk.'

I observed that the coachman drove up St. Martin's Lane and through a collection of streets which I had never seen before. It was the part called St. Giles's; a place which is a kind of laystall into which are shot every day quantities of the scum, dirt, and refuse of this huge and overgrown city. I looked out of the window upon a crowd of faces more villainous than one could conceive possible, stamped with the brand of Cain. They were lying about in the doorways, at the open windows, for it was the month of September and a warm day and on the doorsteps and in the unpaved, unlit, squalid streets. Never did I see so many ragged and naked brats; never did I see so many cripples, so many hunchbacks, so many deformed people: they were of all kinds—bandy-legged, knock-kneed, those whose shins curve outward like a bow, round-backed, one-eyed, blind, lame.

'They are the beggars,' said my companion. 'Their deformities mean drink: they mean the mothers who drink and drop the babies about. Beggars and thieves—they are the people of St. Giles's.'

'I wonder you come this way. Are you not afraid?'

'They will not hurt me. I wish they would,' she added with a sigh.

A strange wish. I was soon, however, to understand what she meant.

Certainly, no one molested us, or stopped the coach: we passed through these streets into High Street, Holborn, and to St. Giles's Church, where the criminal on his way to Tyburn receives his last drink. Then, by another turn, into a noble square with a garden surrounded by great houses, of which the greatest was built for the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth. The coachman stopped before one of these houses on the East side of the Square. It was a very fine and noble mansion indeed.

I threw open the door of the coach and handed Madame down the steps.

'This is my house,' she said. 'Will you come in with me?'

I followed marvelling how an actress could be so great a lady: but still I remembered how she spoke familiarly to those two villains in the King's Bench Prison. The doors flew open. Within, a row of a dozen tall hulking fellows in livery stood up to receive Madame. She walked through them with an air that belonged to a Duchess. Then she turned into a small room on the left hand and threw herself into a chair. 'So,' she said, 'with these varlets I am a great lady. Here, and in your company, Will, I am nothing but . . .' She paused and sighed. 'I will tell you another time.'

I think I was more surprised at the familiarity with which she addressed me than with the splendour of the place. This room, for instance, though but little, was lofty and its walls were painted with flowers and birds: silver candlesticks, each with two branches, stood on the mantelshelf, which was a marvel of fine carving: a rich carpet covered the floor: there were two or three chairs and a table in white and gold. A portrait of Madame hung over the fireplace.

'Forgive me, my friend.' She sprang from the chair

and pulled the bell rope. 'Before we talk you must take some dinner.'

She gave her orders in a quick peremptory tone as one accustomed to be obeyed. In a few minutes the table was spread with a white cloth and laid out with a cold chicken, a noble ham, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of Madeira. You may imagine that I made very little delay in sitting down to these good things. Heavens! How good they were after the prolonged diet of bread and cheese!

Madame looked on and waited, her chin in her hand. When I desisted at length, she poured out another glass of Madeira. 'Tell me,' she said. 'Your sweet wife and the lovely boy—are they as hungry as you?'

I shook my head sadly.

'We shall see, presently, what we can do. Meantime, tell me the whole story.'

I told her, briefly, that my story was nothing at all but the story of a man out of employment who could not find any and was slowly dropping into shabbiness of appearance and weakness of body.

'No work? Why, I supposed you would go back to—to—to something in the City.'

'Though my father was a Knight and a Lord Mayor, I am a simple musician by trade. I am not a gentleman.'

'I like you all the better,' she replied, smiling. 'I am not a gentlewoman either. The actress is a rogue and a vagabond. So is the musician, I suppose.'

I stared. Was she, then, still an actress—and living in this stately Palace?

'You are a musician. Do you, then, want to find work as a fiddler?'

'That is what I am looking for.'

'Let us consider. Do you play like a—a—gentleman or like one of the calling?'

'I am one of the calling. When I tell you that I used to live by fiddling for sailors to dance——'

'Say no more—say no more. They are the finest critics in the world. If you can please them it is enough. Why should I not engage you, myself?'

'You—engage—me? You—Madame?'

'Friend Will,' she laid her hand on mine, 'there are reasons why I wish you well and would stand by you if I could. I will tell you, another day, what those reasons are. Let me treat you as a friend. When we are alone, I am not Madame: I am Jenny.'

There are some women who if they said such a thing as this, would be taken as declaring the passion of love. No one could look at Jenny's face, which was all simplicity and candour, and entertain the least suspicion of such a thing.

'Nay, I can only marvel,' I said. For I still thought that I was talking to some great lady. 'I think that I must be dreaming.'

'Since you know not where you are, this is the Soho Assembly and I am Madame Vallance.'

I seemed to have heard of Madame Vallance.

'You know nothing. That is because you have been in the King's Bench. I will now tell you, what nobody else knows, that Madame Vallance is Jenny Wilmot. I have left the stage, for a time, to avoid a certain person. Here, if I go among the company, I can wear a domino and remain unknown. Do you know nothing about us? We have masquerades, galas, routs—everything. Come with me. I will show you my Ball Room.'

She led me up the grand staircase from the Hall into a most noble room. On the walls were hung many mirrors: between the mirrors were painted Cupids and flowers: rout seats were placed all round the room: the hanging

candelabra contained hundreds of candles: at one end stood a music gallery.

'Will,' she said, 'go upstairs and play me something.'

I obeyed.

I found an instrument, which I tuned. Then I stood up in the gallery and played.

She stood below, listening. 'Well played!' she cried. 'Now play me a dance tune. See if you can make me dance.'

I played a tune which I had often played to the jolly sailors. I know not what it is called. It is one of those tunes which run in at the ears and down to the heels, which it makes as light as a feather and as quicksilver for nimbleness. In a minute she was dancing—with such grace, such spirit, such quickness of motion, as if every limb was without weight. And her fair face smiling and her blue eyes dancing!—never was there such a figure of grace: as for the step, it was as if invented on the spot, but I believe that she had learned it. Afraid of tiring her, I laid down the violin and descended into the hall.

She gave me both her hands. 'Will,' she said. 'You will make my fortune if you consent to join my orchestra. There never was such playing. Those sailors! How could they let you go? Now listen. I can pay you thirty shillings. Will you come? The Treasury pays every Saturday morning. You shall have, besides, four weeks in advance. Spend it in generous food after your long Lent. Say—Will you accept?'

'It is too much, Jenny.' I took her hand and kissed it. 'First you take me out of prison: then you give me the means of living. How can I thank you sufficiently? How repay——'

'There is nothing to repay. I will tell you another time why I take an interest in you.'

IN A MINUTE SHE WAS DANCING.

'When the most beautiful woman in the world——'

'Stop, Will. I warn you. There must be no love-making.' I suppose she saw the irresistible admiration in my eyes. 'Oh! I am not angry. But compliments of that kind generally lead to love-making. They all try it, but it is quite useless—now,' she added with a sigh. 'And you, of all men, must not.'

I made no reply, not knowing what to say.

'There is another face in your home, Will, that is far more beautiful than mine. Think of that face. Enough said.'

'I protest——' I began.

She laid her hand upon my lips. 'There must be no compliments,' she said. Her voice was severe but her smiling eyes forgave.

I left her and hastened home with dancing feet.

I was returning with an engagement of thirty shillings a week: I had four weeks' pay in my pocket: Fortune once more smiled upon me: I ran in and kissed my wife with an alacrity and a cheerfulness which rejoiced her as much as it astonished her. I threw down the money. 'Take it, my dear,' I said. 'There is more to come. We are saved again. Oh! Alice—we are saved—and by the same hand as before.'

'I have heard of Madame Vallance,' said Tom, presently. 'She comes from no one knows where: she keeps herself secluded: at the Assemblies she always wears a mask: the people say she is generous: some think she is rich: others that the expense of the place must break her.'

'I hope she is another Crœsus,' I said. 'I hope that the River of Pactolus will flow into her lap. I hope she will inherit the mines of Golconda. I hope she will live a thousand years and marry a Prince. And we will drink her health in a bowl of punch this very night.'

CHAPTER III.

THE MASQUERADE.

I COMMENCED my duties in the music gallery on one of the nights devoted to the amusement called the Masquerade. It was an amusement new to me and to all except those who can afford to spend five guineas, besides the purchase of a dress, on the pleasure of a single night. I understand the Masquerade has taken a great hold upon the fashionable world and upon those who have money to spend and are eager for the excitement of a new pleasure. 'Give—give' is the cry of those who live, day by day, for the pleasure of the moment.

Truly in a Masquerade there is everything: the novelty or the beauty of the disguise: the music: the dancing: the revelry after supper: the gambling: the pursuit of beauty in disguise—it is wonderful to reflect, in the quiet corner of the earth in which I write, that, across the Atlantic, in London City, there are thousands who are never happy save when they are crowded together, seeking such excitement as is afforded by the masquerade, the assembly, the promenade and the pleasure garden. Here we have no such excitements and we want none: life for us flows in a tranquil stream: for them it flows away in waterfalls and cataracts, leaping to the sea.

Madame managed her masquerades as she did everything, with the greatest care: she arranged everything: the selection of the music: the decorations: the supper: even the chalking of the floor. The doors were thrown open at eleven. Long before that hour the Square was filled with people; some were come to see the fashionable

throng arrive—the fine dresses of the ladies and the masquerading of the men. Some were come to pick the pockets of the others. There was no confusion: the hackney coaches and the chairs were directed by Madame's servants, who stood outside, to arrive by one road and to depart by another. Thus, one after the other, without quarrelling or fighting, drove to the doors, deposited their company and departed. The same order was observed in the departure.

For my own part, as there was nothing to do before eleven, I amused myself by going round and seeing the rooms all lit up with candles in sconces or by candelabra and painted with flowers and fruit and Cupids even to the ceiling, and hung with costly curtains. It is a large and spacious house, of commanding appearance, built by an Earl of Carlisle. There is a grand staircase, broad and stately: when a well-dressed Company are going up and down it looks like the staircase of a Palace: on the landing I found flowers in pots and bushes in tubs which gave the place a rural appearance and so might lead the thoughts of the visitor insensibly into the country. There are a great many rooms in the original House, which has been very handsomely increased by the addition of two large chambers, one above the other, built out at the back, over part of the garden. One of these new rooms was the Ball Room which I have already mentioned. The other room below it, equally large but not so high, was used as the supper-room. It had its walls painted with dancing Satyrs and Fauns: gilded pilasters, raised an inch or so, relieved the flatness of the wall. This was the supper-room: for the moment it had nothing in it but long narrow tables arranged down the room in rows: the servants were already beginning to spread upon them the napery and lay the knives and forks for supper.

On the ground-floor on the right hand of the entrance hall was a large room used as a card-room. Here stood a long table covered with a green cloth for the players of those games which require a Bank or a large company. They are Hazard, Lansquenet, Loo, Faro, and I know not how many more. But, whatever their names, they all mean the same thing and only one thing, viz., gambling. Along the wall on either side were small tables for parties of two or four, who came to play Quadrille, Whist, Piquet, Écarté, and the like—games more dangerous to the young and the beginner than the more noisy gambling of the crowd. Candles stood on all the small tables and down the middle of the great table: there were also candles in sconces on the wall. As yet none of them were lit.

While I was looking round the empty room, Madame herself came in dressed in white satin, and carrying her domino in her hand.

'I look into every room,' she said, 'before the doors are open: but into this room I look two or three times every evening.'

'You come to look at the players?'

'I have a particular reason for coming here. I will tell you some time or other—perhaps to-night, Will. If so, it will be the greatest surprise of your life—the very greatest surprise. Yes—I watch the players. Their faces amuse me. When I see a man losing time after time, and remaining calm and unmoved, I say to myself, "There is a gentleman." Play is the finest test of good breeding. When a man curses his luck; curses his neighbour for bringing him bad luck; bangs the table with his fist; and calls upon all the Gods to smite him dead, I say to myself, "That is a city spark."'

'I fear I am a city spark.'

'When I see two sitting together at a table quiet and

alone I ask myself which is the sharper and which is the flat. By watching them for a few minutes I can always find out—one of them always is the sharper, you see, and the other always the flat. And if you watch them for a few minutes you can always find out. Beware of this room, Will. Be neither sharper nor flat.'

She turned and went off to see some other room.

Looking out at the back I saw that the garden had been hung with coloured lamps, and looked gay and bright. It was a warm fine evening: there would be many who would choose the garden for a promenade. Other rooms there were: the Blue Room: the Star Room: the Red Room: the Chinese Room: I know not what, nor for what they were all used.

But the time approached. I climbed up the steep stairs and took my place in the music gallery, where already most of the orchestra were assembled: like them I tuned my violin, and then awaited the arrival of the Company.

They came by tickets which included supper. Each ticket cost five guineas, and admitted one gentleman or two ladies, including supper. It seems a monstrous price for a single evening; but the cost of the entertainment was enormous. The ticket itself was a beautiful thing representing Venus with Cupids. They were gazing with interest upon a Nymph lying beside a fountain. She had, as yet, nothing upon her, and she was apparently engaged in thinking what she should wear for the evening. A pretty thing, prettily drawn. But five guineas for a single evening!

As soon as the doors were thrown open, a line of footmen received the company, took their tickets and showed them into the tea-room, where that refreshment was offered before the ball commenced. When this room was full, the doors leading to the ball-rooms and the other rooms were

also thrown open, and the company streamed along the great gallery, which was lined with flowering shrubs. Here was stationed a small string band playing soft and pleasing music. Then they crowded up the Grand staircase. When most of the masqueraders were within the Ball-room, and before they had done looking about them and crying out for astonishment at the mirrors and the candelabra and the lights, we struck up the music in the gallery, and as soon as order was a little restored, the minuets began.

For my own part I love to look upon dancing. The country-dance expresses the happiness of youth and the gladness of life. The hey and the jig are rustic joys which cannot keep still, but must needs jump about to show their pleasure. But the minuet expresses the refinement, the courtesies, the politeness of life. It is artificial, but the politeness of Fashion in the Civilized world must be acknowledged to be an improvement on mere Nature, which is too often barbarous in its expression and coarse in its treatment. I know not any of our music which could be played to such a dance of savages as the Guinea Traders report from the West Coast and the Bight of Benin.

The company flowed in fast. All, except a few who kept about the doors and did not venture in the crowd, were in masquerade dress, and even those who were not carried dominoes in their hands. One would have thought the whole world had sent representatives to the ball. There were pigtailed Chinese; Dervishes in turbans; American Indians with tomahawks; Arabs in long silken robes; negroes and negresses; proud Castilians; Scots in plaid; Monks and Romish Priests; Nuns and Sisters; milkmaids in dowlass; ploughboys in smocks; lawyers; soldiers and sailors: there were gods and goddesses; Venus

came clad much like her figure in the books; Diana carried her bow; the Graces endeavoured to appear as they are commonly represented: Apollo came with his lyre; Mars with his shield and spear: Vulcan with his lame leg: Hercules with his club. There were dozens of Cupids: there were dozens of Queens; Cleopatra; Dido; Mary, Queen of Scots; and Queen Elizabeth. There were famous kings as Henry the Fifth; Henry the Eighth: Charles the First; and Charles the Second. There were potentates, as the Pope, the Sultan, the Grand Cham, Prester John, and the Emperor of China: there were famous women, mostly kings' favourites, as the Fair-Haired Editha: Fair Rosamund: Jane Shore, the most beautiful of London maidens: and merry Nell Gwynne, once an Orange Girl: there were half a dozen ladies representing Joan of Arc in armour: there was a bear-ward leading a man dressed as a bear who made as if he would hug the women (at which they screamed in pretended affright) and danced to the music of a crowd: there were gipsies and fortune-tellers: there were two girls—nobody knew who they were—one of whom danced on a tight-rope, while the other turned summersaults. There were Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon and clown, as if straight from Drury Lane: there was the showman who put up his show in a corner and loudly proclaimed the wonders that were within: there was the Cheap Jack in another corner, who pretended to sell everything: there was the itinerant Quack who bawled his nostrums for prolonging life and restoring youth and arresting beauty: there was the orange girl, of Drury Lane, impudent and ready with an answer and a joke to anything: there were dancing-girls who ran in and out, cleared a space; danced: then ran to another place and danced again. I learned, afterwards, that the dancers and tumblers, with many of

the masks, were actors, actresses, and dancing-girls, hired from the Theatre by Madame herself, in order to ensure vivacity and activity and movement in the evening. If these things were neglected or left to the masquers themselves, the assembly would fall quite flat, very few persons having the least power to play any part or keep up any character. Punchinello, for instance, trod the floor with a face like a physician for solemnity: the clown could not dance or laugh or make other people laugh: and so with the women: they thought their part was played as soon as they were dressed.

Meantime, the music played on without stopping. After the minuets, we proceeded to the country dance. But you must not think that at the Masquerade we conducted our dancing with the same order and form as an ordinary assembly. I looked down upon a scene which was quite unlike the ordinary assembly, and yet was the most beautiful, the most animated, the most entrancing that I had ever witnessed. The room was like a flower-bed in July filled with flowers of every colour. It was enough, at first, to look at the whole company, as one might look upon a garden filled with flowers. Presently I began to detach couples or small groups. First, I observed the fair domino who lured on the amorous youth—dressed, perhaps, as a monk—by running away and yet looking back—a Parthian Amazon of Love. She must be young, he thought, with such a sprightly air and so easy a step: she must be beautiful, with such a figure, to match her face: she must be rich, with such a habit—with those gold chains and bracelets and pearls. Presently the young fellow caught his goddess: he spoke to her and he led her to a seat among the plants where they could sit a little retired and apart. But from the gallery I could see them. He took her hand: he pressed her,

saying I know not what: presently she took off her domino: and disclosed loveliness: the youth fell into raptures: she held him off: she put on her domino again: she rose: he begged for a little more discourse—it was a pretty pantomime—she refused: she went back to the general company: they remained together all the night: when they went away in the morning he led her out whispering, and one hopes that this was the beginning of a happy match. The removal of the domino to let the gentleman see the masked face was, I observed, very common, yet it was not always that the little comedy ended, as they say, happily. Sometimes the lady, after showing her face, would run away and exchange a kerchief, or a mantle, with a friend so as to mystify and bewilder her pursuer, who could not tell what had become of his lovely partner.

Such were the little comedies performed before the eyes of the spectators from the music gallery. As for the rest, the mountebanks pranced, and the dancing-girls and the tumbling-girls capered, and they all laughed and sang and gave themselves wholly to the mirth and merriment of the moment.

Some of the men I observed were drunk when they arrived: others pretended to be drunk in order that they might roll about and catch hold of the girls. It has always been to me a marvel that women do not mark their displeasure, at the intrusion upon their pleasures of men who are drunk. They mar all the enjoyment of society, whether at the theatre, or at such assemblies as this, or in the drawing-room. Ladies of fashion have it in their power to put an end to the habit at a stroke of the pen, so to speak: namely, by forbidding the presence at their assemblies of gentlemen in liquor: they should be refused admission however great their position, even if their breast is ablaze with stars.

There were many stars present, and with them ladies whose head-dresses were covered with diamonds. It was rumoured that Madame retained in her service for these occasions a body of stout fellows on the watch for any attempt upon the jewels. It was also rumoured that there were R—l P—s present at the Masquerade: the young D— of Y—k, for instance, it was said positively, was among the company, but so disguised that none could recognise him. Some of the ladies wore no dominoes; but these persons, I observed, did not leave their partners and took no share in the merriment. Indeed, they seemed, for the most part, not to laugh at the fun: I suppose they found it somewhat low and vulgar. In our gallery they were well known. 'That is the Duchess of Q— with the rubies: the lady with the diamond spray in her hair is Lady H—: the lady with the strings of pearls round her neck and arms is the Lady Florence D—, and so forth—with scandalous stories and gossip which belonged, I thought, more to the footmen in the hall than to the music gallery. We had no such talk at the Dog and Duck. Perhaps, however, the reason for our reticence in that favourite retreat and rendezvous of the aristocracy was that there were no women at the Dog and Duck whose lives were not scandalous. The stories, therefore, would become monotonous.

At one, a procession was formed for supper. There was no order or rank observed because there were plenty of persons who masqueraded as noblemen, and it would take too long to examine into their claims. The small band of stringed instruments, of which I have spoken, headed the procession, played the company into the supper-room, and played while they were taking supper. There was not room for more than half in the supper-room: the rest waited their turn.

'It is a rest for us,' said the First violin, 'we shall get some supper downstairs. Eat and drink plenty, for what we have done already is a flea-bite compared with what we have to do.'

It was, indeed. They came back, their cheeks flushed, their eyes bright, with wine. Some of them, too tipsy to stand, rolled upon the rout seats, and so fell fast asleep.

I observed that the great ladies and the gentlemen with them did not return after supper: their absence removed some restraint: and the gentlemen who had arrived without a masquerade dress did not come back after supper. The company was thinner, but it was much louder: there was no longer any pretence of keeping up a character: the Quack left off bawling his wares: the showman deserted his show: the fortune-tellers left their tents: the Hermit left his cell: the dancing and tumbling girls joined in the general throng: there were many sets formed but little regular dancing: all were broken up by rushes of young men more than half drunk: they caught the girls and kissed them—nothing loath, though they shrieked: it was a proof that the gentlewomen had all gone, that no one resented this rudeness—either a partner or the girl herself: the scene became an orgy: all together were romping, touzling, laughing, shrieking, and quarrelling.

Still the music kept up: still we played with unflinching arm and all the spirit which can be put into them, the most stirring dance tunes. At last they left off trying to dance: some of the women lay back on the rout seats partly with liquor overcome and partly with fatigue: men were sprawling unable to get up: bottles of wine were brought up from the supper-room and handed round. The men grew every minute noisier: the women shrieked louder and more shrilly—perhaps with cause. And every minute some slipped away and the crowd grew thinner, till there were

left little more than a heap of drunken men and weary women.

At last word came up that it was five o'clock, the time for closing.

The conductor laid down his violin: the night's work was over: we would go.

The people below clamoured for more music, but in vain. Then they, too, began to stream out noisily.

As I passed the supper-room I saw that half a dozen young fellows had got in and were noisily clamouring for champagne. The waiters who were clearing the supper took no notice. Then one of them with a bludgeon set to work and began to smash plates, glasses, dishes, bottles, windows, in a kind of frenzy of madness or mischief. Half a dozen stout fellows rushed at him: carried him out of the supper-room and so into the Square outside. It was a fitting end for the Masquerade.

While I was looking on, I was touched on the arm by a mask. I knew her by her white satin dress for Madame.

I had seen her from time to time flitting about the room, sometimes with a partner, sometimes alone. She was conversing one moment with a gentleman whose star betokened his rank, and the next with one of her paid actors or actresses, directing the sports. I had seen her dancing two minuets in succession each with a grace and dignity which no other woman in the room could equal.

'A noisy end, Will, is it not? We always finish this way. The young fellow who smashed the glass is Lord St. Osyth. To-morrow morning he will have to pay the bill. 'Tis a good-natured fool. See: they are carrying out the last of the drunken hogs. Faugh! How drunk they are!'

'I have watched you all the evening, Madame. Believe me, there were none of the ladies who approached you in the minuet.'

'Naturally, Will. For I have danced it on the stage, where we can at least surpass the minuet of the Assembly. What do they understand of action and carriage, and how to bear the body and how to use the arms and how to handle the fan? But it was not to talk about my dancing —Will—I said that perhaps I should be able to show you something or to tell you something—that might astonish you. Come with me: but first—I would not have you recognised, put on this domino'—there were a good many lying about—'So—Now follow me and prepare for the greatest surprise of your whole life.'

In the hall there were still many waiting for their carriages and chairs. Outside, there was a crowd now closing in upon the carriages, and now beaten back by Madame's men, who were armed with clubs and kept the pickpockets and thieves at bay. And there was a good deal of bawling, cursing, and noise.

Madame led the way into the card-room. Play had apparently been going on all night: the candles on the table were burning low: the players had nearly all gone: the servants were taking the shillings from under the candlesticks: at the long table, two or three were still left: they were not playing: they were settling up their accounts.

A young fellow got up as we came in. 'What's the good of crying, Harry?' he said, to his companion. 'I've dropped five hundred. Well—better luck to-morrow.'

'Poor lad!' said Madame. 'That morrow will never come. 'Tis a pretty lad: I am sorry for him. He will end in a Debtors' Prison or he will carry a musket in the ranks.'

They were settling, one by one, with the player who had held the Bank for the evening. There were no disputes: they had some system by means of which their

losses or gains were represented by counters. The business of the conclusion was the paying or receiving of money as shown by their counters which were accepted as money. For instance, if a person took so many counters he incurred so much liability. But, I do not understand what were the rules. The man who held the Bank was, I heard afterwards, one of those who live by keeping the Bank against all comers. He was an elderly man of fine manners, extremely courtly in his behaviour and his dress. One by one he received the players, of whom there were a dozen or so, and examined their liabilities or their claims. There was left but one of the players, a man whose back was turned to me.

'Sir,' he said politely, 'I am grieved indeed to keep a gentleman waiting so long. Let me now release you. I hope, Sir, that the balance will prove in your favour. It pleases me, believe me, that a gentleman should leave my table the winner. So, Sir, thank you. I perceive, Sir, that your good fortune has deserted you for this evening. I trust it is but a temporary cloud. After all it is a trifle—a bagatelle—a mere matter of one hundred and fifty-five guineas—one hundred and fifty-five. Your Honour is not, perhaps, good at figures, but, should you choose to verify——'

The other man whose back and shoulders were still the only part of him presented to my view, snatched the paper and looked at it and threw it on the table.

'It is right, Sir?'

'I suppose it is right. The luck was against me, as usual; the luck never is for me.'

I knew the voice and started.

Madame whispered in my ear softly. 'The greatest surprise of your life.'

'One hundred and fifty-five guineas,' said the gentleman

who kept the Bank. 'If you are not able to discharge the liability to-night, Sir, I shall be pleased to wait upon you to-morrow.'

'No! No! I can pay my way still—pay my way.' He pulled out a long purse filled with guineas.

'Your luck will certainly turn, Sir, before long. Why, I have seen instances——'

'Damn it, Sir, leave me and my affairs alone. My luck never will turn. Don't I know my own affairs?'

The voice could be none other than my cousin Matthew's. I was startled. My head, which had been filled with the noise of the music and the excitement of the revelry, became clear at once and attentive and serious. My cousin Matthew. Impossible not to know that voice!

He poured out the guineas on the table and began to count them, dividing them into heaps of ten. Then he counted them over again, very slowly, and at last, with the greatest reluctance passed them over to the other player, who in his turn counted them over, taking up the pieces and biting them in order to see if they were good.

'I thank you, Sir,' he said, gravely. 'I trust that on a future occasion——'

Matthew waved his hand impatiently. The other turned and walked down the room. The candles were mostly out by this time; only two or three were left on the point of expiring: the room was in a kind of twilight. Matthew turned his head—it *was* my cousin: he seemed not to see us: he sank into a chair and laid his head in his hands groaning.

No one was left in the room except Madame, Matthew and myself.

Madame stepped forward: the table was between her and my cousin. As for me, I kept in the background

watching and listening. What might this thing mean? Matthew, the sober, upright, religious London citizen! Matthew the worthy descendant of the great Puritan preacher! Matthew the denouncer of wicked musicians! Matthew the scourge of frivolity and vice! Matthew, my supplanter! Matthew in a gaming room! Matthew playing all night long and losing a hundred and fifty-five guineas in a single night! What was one to believe next?

Jenny bent over the table: she still kept on her domino.

'Mr. Matthew Halliday,' she said.

He lifted his head, stupidly.

'I congratulate you, Mr. Matthew Halliday,' she went on. 'You have passed a most pleasant and profitable evening. A hundred and fifty-five guineas! It is nothing, of course, to a rich merchant like yourself.'

'Who are you?' he asked. 'What concern is it of yours?'

'I am one who knows you. One who knows you already, and too well.'

He stood up. 'I am going, Mistress,' he said—'unless you have anything else to say.'

'Mr. Halliday—you lost two hundred guineas last night, and on Sunday you lost four hundred.'

'Zounds, Miss or Mistress, how do you know?'

'I know because I am told. You are a very rich man, Mr. Halliday, are you not? You must be to lose so much every night. You must be very rich indeed. You have whole fleets of your own, and Quays and Warehouses filled with goods—and you inherited a great fortune only two years ago.'

He sank back in a chair and gazed stupidly upon her.

'How speeds your noble trade? How fares it with your fleets? How much is left of your great fortune?'

He growled, but made no reply. Curiosity and wonder

seized him and held him. Besides, what reply could he make?

'Who are you?' he asked.

'I will tell you, perhaps. How do you stand with Mr. Probus?'

He sprang to his feet again. 'This is too much. How dare you speak of my private affairs? What do you know about Mr. Probus?'

'How long is it, Mr. Halliday, since you agreed with Mr. Probus that your cousin should be locked up in a Debtors' Prison there to remain till he died, or sold his birthright?'

He answered with a kind of roar, as if he had no words left. He stood before her—the table between—half in terror—half in rage. Who was this woman? Besides, he was already very nearly beside himself over the long continuance of his bad luck.

'Who are you?' he asked again. 'What do you know about my cousin?'

'I will tell you, directly, who I am. About your cousin, Matthew, I warn you solemnly. The next attempt you make upon his life and liberty will bring upon your head —yours—not to speak of the others—the greatest disaster that you can imagine, or can dread. The greatest disaster,' she repeated solemnly, 'that you can imagine or can dread.' She looked like a Prophetess, standing before him with hand raised and with solemn voice.

'This is fooling. What do you know? Who are you?'

'I cannot tell what kind of disaster it will be—the greatest—the worst possible—it will be. Be warned. Keep Mr. Probus at arm's length or he will ruin you—he will ruin you, unless he has ruined you already.'

'You cannot frighten me with bugaboo stories. If you will not tell me who you are, I shall go.'

She tore off her glove. 'Does this hand,' she said, 'remind you of nothing?'

On the third finger of the white hand was a wedding-ring which I had never seen there before.

He stared at the hand. Perhaps he suspected. I think he did. No one who had once seen that hand could possibly forget it.

She tore off her domino. 'You have doubtless forgotten, Matthew, by this time, the face—of your wife.'

He cursed her. He stood up and cursed her in round terms. I don't know why. He accused her of nothing. But he cursed her. She was the origin and cause of his bad luck.

I would have interfered. 'Let be—let be,' she said. 'The time will surely come when the ruin which I have foretold will fall upon him. Let us wait till then. That will be sufficient punishment for him. I see it coming—I know not when. I see it coming. Let him curse.'

He desisted. He ran out of the room without another word.

She looked after him with a deep sigh.

'I told you, Will, that I had a surprise for you—the greatest surprise of your life. I will tell you more to-morrow if you will come in the afternoon. You shall hear more about Matthew, my husband Matthew. Get you gone now and home to bed with all the speed you may. Good-night, cousin Will—cousin Will.'

I left her as I was bidden. I walked home through the deserted streets of early morning. My brain was burning. Matthew the gambler! Matthew the husband of Jenny! Matthew the gambler. Why—everything shouted the word as I passed: the narrow streets of Soho: the water lapping the arches of Westminster Bridge: the keen air blowing over the Bank; all shouted the words—'Matthew

'YOU HAVE DOUBTLESS FORGOTTEN THE FACE.'

the gambler! Matthew the husband of Jenny! Matthew the gambler!' And when I lay down to sleep the words that rang in my ear were 'Matthew my husband—Cousin Will!—Cousin Will!'

CHAPTER IV.

WHO SHE WAS.

'You now know, Will,' said Jenny, when I called next day, 'why I have been interested in you, since I first saw you. Not on account of your good looks, Sir, though I confess you are a very pretty fellow: nor on account of your playing, which is spirited and true; but because you are my first cousin by marriage.'

She received me, sitting in the small room on the left of the Hall. The great house was quite empty, save for the servants, who were always clearing away the remains of one fête and arranging for another. Their footsteps resounded in the vacant corridors and their voices echoed in the vacant chambers.

'Jenny, I have been able to think of nothing else. I could not sleep for thinking of it. I am more and more amazed.'

'I knew you would be. Well, Will, I wanted to have a long talk with you. I have a great deal to say. First, I shall give you some tea—believe me, it is far better for clearing the head after a night such as last night, than Madeira. I have a great deal to tell you—I fear you will despise me—but I will hide nothing. I am resolved to hide nothing from you.'

Meantime the words kept ringing in my ears: 'Matthew a gambler! The religious Matthew! To whom music

was a snare of the Devil and the musician a servant of the Devil! The steady Matthew! The irreproachable Matthew!'

Yet, since I had always known him to be a violator of truth: a slanderer and a backbiter, why not, also, a gambler? Why not also a murderer—a forger—anything? I was to find out before long that he was quite ready to become the former of these also, upon temptation. Yet the thing was wonderful, even after I had actually seen it and proved it. And again, Matthew married! Not to a sober and godly citizen's daughter, but to an actress of Drury Lane Theatre! Matthew, to whom the theatre was as the mouth of the Bottomless Pit! Who could believe such a thing?

As for what follows, Jenny did not tell me the whole in this one afternoon. I have put together, as if it was all one conversation, what took several days or perhaps several weeks.

'You think it so wonderful, Will,' Jenny said, reading my thoughts in my face. 'For my own part it is never wonderful that a man should gamble, or drink, or throw himself away upon an unworthy mistress. Every man may go mad: it is part of man's nature: women, never, save for love and jealousy and the like. Men are so made: madness seizes them: down they go to ruin and the grave. It is strong drink with some: and avarice with some: and gaming with some. Your cousin Matthew is as mad as an Abram man.'

She was silent for a while. Then she went on again. I have written it down much as if all that follows was a single speech. It was broken up by my interruptions and by her pauses and movements. For she was too quick and restless to sit down while she was speaking. She would spring from her chair and walk about the room; she

would stand at the window and drum at the panes of glass: she would stand over the fireplace: she would look in the round mirror hanging on the wall. She had a thousand restless ways. Sometimes she stood behind me and laid a hand on my shoulder as if she was ashamed for me to look upon her.

It was a wonderful tale she told me: more wonderful that a woman who had gone through that companionship should come out of it, filled through and through, like a sponge, with the knowledge of wickedness and found in childhood with those who practise wickedness, yet should be herself so free from all apparent stain or taint of it. Surely, unless the face, the eyes, the voice, the language, the thoughts, can all lie together, this woman was one of the purest and most innocent of Heaven's creatures.

It is not always the knowledge of evil that makes a woman wicked. Else, if you think of it, there would be no good woman at all among us. Consider: it is only a question of degree. A child born in the Mint; or in Fullwood's Rents; or in St. Giles's: or in Turnmill Street learns, one would think, everything that is vile. But children do not always inquire into the meaning of what they hear: most things that they see or hear may pass off them like water from a duck's back. Their best safeguard is their want of curiosity. Besides, it is not only in St. Giles's that children hear things that are best kept from them: in the respectable part of the city, in Cheapside itself, they can hear the low language and the vile sayings and the blasphemous oaths of the common sort. Children are absorbed by their own pursuits and thoughts. The grown-up world: the working world, does not belong to them: they see and see not: they hear and hear not: they cannot choose, but see and hear: yet they inquire not into the meaning.

'Will,' she said, 'I would I had never heard your name. It has been an unlucky name to me—and perhaps it will be more unlucky still.' I know not if she was here foretelling what certainly happened, afterwards. 'Your cousin, Matthew, is no common player, who carries a few guineas in his pocket and watches them depart with a certain interest and even anxiety and then goes away. This man is a fierce, thirsty, insatiable gambler. There is a play called 'The Gamester' in which the hero is such an one. He plays like this hero with a thirst that cannot be assuaged. He plays every night: he has, I believe, already ruined himself: yet he cannot stop: he would play away the whole world and then would stake his soul, unless he had first sold his soul for money to play with. Soul? If he has any soul—but I know not.'

'You amaze me, Jenny. Indeed, I am overwhelmed with amazement. I cannot get the words out of my head, "Matthew a gambler! Matthew a gambler!"'

'Yes—Matthew a gambler. He has been a gambler in a small way for many years. When he got possession of your father's money and the management of that House, he became a gambler in a large way. I say that I believe he is already well nigh ruined. You have seen him on one night, Will; he is at the same game every night. I have had him watched—I know. His luck is such as the luck of men like that always is—against him continually. He never wins: or if ever, then only such small sums as will serve to encourage him. There is no evening in the week, not even Sunday, when he does not play. I have reason to know—I will tell you why, presently—that he has already lost a great fortune.'

'The fortune that my father left to him. It should have been mine.'

'Then, my poor Will, it never will be yours. For it

is gone. I learned, six months ago, that his business is impaired: the credit of the House is shaken. Worse than this, Will'—she laid her hand on my arm—'he had then, already, borrowed large sums of Mr. Probus, and as he could not pay he was borrowing more. There is the danger for you!'

'What danger?'

'You musicians live in the clouds. Why does Matthew continue to borrow money? He pretends that he wants to put it into the business. Really, he gambles with it. Why does Probus continue to lend him money? Probus does not suspect the truth. In the hope that he will presently have such a hold over Matthew that he will get possession of the business, become a partner and turn out Matthew and your uncle. It looks splendid. All these ships: the wharf covered with goods: but the ships are mortgaged and their cargoes are mortgaged: and the interest on Probus's loans can only be paid by borrowing more. In a very short time, Will, the bubble will burst. The situation is already dangerous; it will then become full of peril.'

'Why dangerous to me? I have borrowed no money.'

'You are a very simple person, Will. They put you into the King's Bench. Yet you don't understand. I do. Matthew wanted to borrow money on the security of that succession. Probus would have lent him money on that security. Probus would have had another finger in the pie. He did not know, then, what he will very soon find out, that all the money he has already advanced to his rich client is lost. Then it was a mere temptation to Matthew to put you under pressure: now it will become a necessity to make you submit: a necessity for both, and they are a pair of equal villains.'

'Last night you warned Matthew. Jenny, your words

. . . . . and I cannot
for it. Last night, suddenly, I saw a V
know not what. It was directed against
and the villains—among them was Matt
back with whips. They fled howling.
makes me speak.'

This kind of talk was new to me: I cc
uneasy.

'Well, you now know the truth. Y
defamed and slandered you: without rel
out ceasing. So long as it was possibl
mischief with your father he did it: he ha
your inheritance: well: you can now,
revenge yourself.'

'Revenge myself? How?'

'You will not only revenge yourself: y
impossible for your cousin to do you any fu

'Does he wish to do me any further inju

'Will, I suppose that you are a fool l
a musician. Wish? A man like that, w
you as much as he could and as often as h
on: it is the nature of such a man . . .

which is conducted entirely by Matthew. He passes now an idle life beside Clapham Common, with his gardens and his green houses. Go to this poor gentleman: tell him the truth. Let him learn that his son is a gambler: that he is wasting all that is left to waste: that his losses have been very heavy already: and that the end is certain bankruptcy. You can tell your uncle that you saw yourself with your own eyes Matthew losing a hundred and fifty-five guineas in the card-room of a Masquerade: this will terrify him, though at first he will not believe it: then he will cause the affairs of the House to be examined, and he will find out, if accountants are any use, how much has been already wasted. Mind, Will, I invent nothing. All this I know. The House is well-nigh ruined.'

'How do you know all this, Jenny?'

'Not by visions, certainly. I know it from information. It is, I assure you, the bare truth. The House is already well-nigh ruined.'

'I fear I cannot tell my uncle these things.'

'It would be a kindness to him in the end, Will. Let him learn the truth before the worst happens.'

I shook my head. Revenge is not a pleasing task. To go to my uncle with such a tale seemed a mean way of returning Matthew's injuries.

'I do not counsel revenge, then,' she went on, again divining my thoughts. 'Call it your safety. When you have alarmed your uncle into calling for an explanation, go and see the man Probus.'

'See Probus? Why?'

'I would separate Probus from his client. Go and tell the man—go and tell him without reference to his past villainies that his client Matthew is an incurable gambler, and that all the money Probus has lent to him has been lost over the gaming table.'

'Tell Probus?' The thought of speaking to Probus except as to a viper was not pleasant.

'I have made inquiries about Probus.' She knew everything, this woman! 'He is of the tribe they call blood-suckers: they fasten upon their victim, and they never let go till such time as there is no more blood to suck. There is some blood left. Probus will never think of you while he is saving what he can of his own. Tell the money-lender this, I say, and what with Probus on the one hand, maddened by his loss, and his own father on the other, well-nigh terrified to death, Matthew will have enough to do.'

'Would you like me to do this, Jenny?'

'I should like it done,' she replied, turning away her face.

'Would you like to do it yourself, Jenny?'

'I am a woman. Women must not do violent things.'

'Jenny, there is more revenge than precaution in this.'

'There may be some revenge, but there is also a good deal of prudence.'

'I cannot do it, Jenny.'

'Are you afraid, Will? To be sure, a musician is not a sold——so—no—Will, forgive me. You are not afraid. Forgive me.'

'I shall leave them to work out their destruction in their own way, whatever way that may be.'

'But that way may be hurtful to you, my poor Will—even fatal to you.'

'I shall leave them alone: their punishment will surely fall upon them, they will dig a trap to their own undoing.'

'Will, I have heard that kind of talk before. I have used those words myself upon the stage.' She threw herself into an attitude and declaimed with fire.

'Think not, Allora, that I dread their hate:
Nor hate, nor vile conspiracy shall turn me—
Still on their own presumptuous heads shall fall
The lightning they invoke for mine: for lower
Hangs yon black thunder cloud: and ever louder
I hear the rumbling of the angry earth.
Wait but a moment: then the flash shall shoot;
Then shall the thunder roar: the earth shall gape;
And where they stood there shall be nothingness.'

'That is your position, Will. For my own part, if I were you, I should prefer safety, and I should not object to revenge.'

'It is true, Jenny.'

'Perhaps. For my own part, I have known a monstrous number of wicked people on whom no lightnings fell, and for whom the earth did never gape. Nothing has happened to them so long as they were gentlemen. With the baser sort, of course, there is Tyburn, and I dare say that feels at the end like the gaping of the earth and the flash of lightning and the roar of the thunder, all together. Even with them some escape.'

I would have quoted the Psalmist, but refrained, because by this time I had made the singular discovery that Jenny seemed to have no knowledge of religion at all. If one spoke in the common way of man's dependence she looked as if she understood nothing: or she said she had heard words to that effect on the stage: if one spoke indirectly of the Christian scheme she showed no response: had I mentioned the Psalmist she would have asked perhaps who the Psalmist was, or where his pieces were played. She never went to church: she never read any books except her own parts. She was sharp and clever in the conduct of affairs: she was not to be taken in by rogues: how could such a woman, considering our mode of education

and the general acknowledgment of Christianity, even in an atheistical age, that prevails in our books, escape some knowledge, or tincture, of religion?

'Do not call it revenge,' she insisted. 'In your own safety you should strike: and without delay. I repeat it: I cannot put it too strongly before you. There is a great danger threatening. When Probus finds that the money is really gone, he will become desperate: he will stick at nothing.'

'Since he knows, now, that nothing will persuade me to sell that chance of succession, he will perhaps desist.'

'He will never desist. If you were dead! The thought lies in both their minds. If you were dead! Then that money would be Matthew's.'

'Do you think Mr. Probus will murder me?'

'Not with his own hands. Still—do you think, Will, that when two villains are continually brooding over the same thought, villainy will not follow? If I were you I would take this tale to the Alderman first, and to Probus next, and I should then keep out of the way for six months at least.'

'No,' I said. 'They shall be left to themselves.'

Perhaps I was wrong. Had I told my uncle all, the bankruptcy would have been precipitated and Probus's claim would have been treated with all the others, and even if that large sum had fallen it would have been added to the general estate and divided accordingly.

It was in the afternoon: the sun was sinking westward: it shone through the window upon Jenny as she restlessly moved about the room—disquieted by all she had to tell me. I remember how she was dressed: in a frock of light blue silk, with a petticoat to match: her hair hung in its natural curls, covered with a kerchief—the soft evening sunlight wrapped her in a blaze of light and colour. And

oh! the pity of it! To think that this divine creature was thrown away upon my wretched cousin! The pity of it!

'Tell me, Jenny,' I said, 'how you became his wife?'

'Yes, Will, I will tell you,' she replied humbly. 'Don't think that I ever loved him—nor could I endure his caresses—but he never offered any—the only man who never wanted to caress me was my husband—to be sure he did not love me—or anyone else—he is incapable of love. He is a worm. His hand is slimy and cold: his face is slimy: his voice is slimy. But I thought I could live with him, perhaps. If not, I could always leave him.'

She paused a little as if to collect herself.

'Every actress,' she went on, 'has troops of lovers. There are the gentlemen first who would fain make her their mistress for a month: those who would make her their mistress for a year: and those who desire only the honour and glory of pretending that she is their mistress: and then there are the men who would like nothing better than to marry the actress and to live upon her salary—believe me, of all these there are plenty. Lastly, there is the gentleman who would really marry the actress, all for love of her, and for no other consideration. I thought at first, that your cousin Matthew was one of these.'

'How did you know him?'

'He was brought into the Green Room one night by some gambling acquaintance. I remarked his long serious face, I thought he was a man who might be trusted. He asked permission to wait upon me——'

'Well?' For she stopped.

'I thought, I say, that he was a man to be trusted. He did not look like one who drank: he did not follow other actresses about with his eyes: I say, Will, that I thought I could trust him. He came to my lodging. He

to be taken away from London and tl
country, never to hear anything moı
Had he done what he promised, Will,
a good wife to him, although he is a sli
did not. He broke his word on the
we came out of church——'

'How?'

'He began by saying that he had a
to offer. He said that when he told
merchant—that, indeed, was his reputat
tion was embarrassed: he wanted money
borrow any: he therefore thought that
actress—that class of person being notori
honour—his very words to me, actually,
hour after leaving the church—he int
gaming-house at which I was to be the
understand why I call him a villain, anc
slimy worm.'

'Jenny!'

'I left him on the spot after telling hi
I left him—I left the Theatre——'

maintenance of his wife, and that he must give me whatever the sum was. He was obliged to give it, otherwise I should have informed the clerks of the Counting-house who I was.'

I laughed. 'Well, but, Jenny, there was another man——'

'You are persistent, Sir. Why should I tell you? Well, I will confess. This man protested a great deal less than the others. He was a noble Lord, if that matters. He was quite different from all the rest: he never came to the Green Room drunk: he never cursed and swore: he never shook his cane in the face of footman or chairman: he was a gentle creature—and he loved me and would have married me: well—I told him who and what I was—I will tell you presently—that mattered nothing. He would carry me away from them all. I would have married him, Will: and we should have been happy: but his sister came to see me and she went on her knees crying and imploring me to refuse him because in the history of their family there had never been any such alliance as that with an actress of no family. Would I bring disgrace into a noble family? If I refused, he would forget me, and she would do all in her power for me, if ever I wanted a friend. It was for his sake—if I loved him I would not injure him. And so she went on: and she persuaded me, Will—because, you see, when people pride themselves about their family it is a pity to bring the gutter into it—with Newgate and Tyburn, isn't it?'

'Jenny, what has Newgate got to do with it?'

'Wait and I will tell you. I gave way. It cost me a great deal, Will—more than you would believe—because I had never loved anyone before—and when a woman does love a man——' The tears rose in her eyes,—'and then it was that your cousin came to the Theatre.'

Poor Jenny! And she always seemed so cheerful, so lively, so happy! Her face might have been drawn to illustrate Milton's 'L'Allegro.' How could she look so happy when she had this unhappy love story and this unhappy marriage to think upon?

'Will,' she cried passionately, 'I am the most unhappy woman in the world.'

I made no reply. Indeed I knew not what there was to say. Matthew was a villain: there can be few worse villains: Jenny was in truth a most injured and a most unhappy woman.

It was growing twilight. What followed was told, or most of it, because I have set down the result of two or three conversations in one, by the light of the fire, in a low voice, a low musical voice—that seemed to rob the naked truth of much of its horrors.

'I told my Lord, Will,' she said, 'what I am going to tell you because I would not have him ignorant of anything, or find out anything—afterwards—but there was no afterwards—which he might think I should have told him before. He has a pretty gift of drawing: he makes pictures of things and people with a pencil and a box of water-colours. I made him take certain sketches for me. He did so, wondering what they might mean.' Here she rose, opened a drawer in a cabinet and took out a little packet tied up with a ribbon. 'First I begged him to sketch me one of the little girls who run about the streets in Soho. There are hundreds of them: they are barefooted: bare-headed: dressed in a sack, in a flannel petticoat: in anything: they have no schooling: they are not taught anything at all: their parents and their brothers and sisters and their cousins and their grandparents are all thieves and rogues together: what can they become? What hope is there for them? See,' she took one of the

pictures out and gave it to me. By the firelight I made out a little girl standing in the street. In her carriage there was something of the freedom of a gipsy in the woods: her hair blew loose in the wind, her scanty petticoat clung to her little figure: she was bare-legged, barefooted, bare-headed.

'Can you see it, Will? Well—when I had got all the pictures together, I asked the artist to sit down, as I have asked you to-day. And when he was sat down, I had the bundle of pictures in my hand, and I said to him, "My Lord, this is a very pretty sketch—I like it all the better because it shows what I was like at that age." "You, Jenny?" "Yes, my Lord, I myself. That little girl is myself." Well, he cried out on the impossibility of the thing. But I assured him of the truth of what I said. Then I took up the next picture. It represented the entrance of a court in Soho. Round this entrance were gathered a collection of men and women with the most evil faces possible. "These, my Lord," I said, "are the people who were once my companions, when they and I were young together." "But not now?" he asked. "Not now," I told him, "save that they all remember me and consider me as one of themselves and come to the Theatre in order to applaud me: the highwaymen going to the pit; the petty thieves and pickpockets and footpads to the gallery." Well, at first he looked serious. Then he cleared up and kissed my hand: he loved me for myself, he said, and as regards the highwaymen and such fellows, he would very soon take me out of their way.'

'But, Jenny——

'Will, I am telling you what I told his Lordship. Believe me, it does not cost me to tell you half as much as it did to tell that noble heart. For he loved me, Will,

and I loved him.' Again her eyes glistened by the red light of the fire.

She took up a third picture. It represented a public-house. Over the door swung the sign of a Black Jack: the first story projected over the ground-floor, and the second story over the first: beside the public-house stood a tall church.

'This,' I told my Lord, 'is the Black Jack tavern. It is the House of Call for most of the rogues and thieves of Soho. The church is St. Giles's Church. As for my own interest in the house, I was born there: my mother and sister still keep the place between them: it is in good repute among the gentry who frequent it for its kitchen, where there is always a fire for those who cook their own suppers, and for the drinks, which are excellent, if not cheap. What is the use of keeping cheap things for thieves? Lightly got, lightly spent. There is nothing cheap at that House. My mother enjoys a reputation for being a Receiver of Stolen Goods—a reputation well deserved, as I have reason to believe. The Goods are all stowed away in a stone vault or cellar once belonging to some kind of house—I know not what.'

I groaned.

'That is how my Lord behaved. Then he kissed my hand again. "Jenny," he said, "it is not the landlady of the Black Jack that I am marrying, but Jenny Wilmot." He asked me to tell him more. Will you hear more?'

'I will hear all you desire to tell me, Jenny.'

'Once I had a father. He was a gipsy, but since he had fair hair and blue eyes, he was not a proper gipsy. I do not know how he got into the caravan with the gipsies. Perhaps he was stolen in infancy: or picked up on a door-step. However, I do not remember him. My mother speaks of him with pride, but I do not know why. By

profession he was a footpad and—and'—she faltered for a moment—'he met the fate that belongs to that calling. See!' She showed me a drawing representing the Triumphal March to Tyburn. 'My mother speaks of it as if it was the fitting end of a noble career. I have never been quite able to think so too, and Will, if I must confess, I would rather that my father had not been——'

'Not formed the leading figure in that procession,' I interposed. 'But go on, Jenny.'

She took up another picture and handed it to me. It was a spirited sketch representing a small crowd; a pump; and a boy held under the pump.

'I had two brothers. This was one. He was a pick-pocket. What could be expected? He was caught in the act and held under a pump. But they kept him so long that it brought on a chill and he died. The other brother is now in the Plantations of Jamaica.'

She produced another picture. It represented an Orange Girl at Drury Lane. She carried her basket of oranges on her arm: she had a white kerchief over her neck and shoulders and another over her head: her face was full of impudence, cleverness and wit.

'That, Will, is the first step upwards of your cousin's wife. From the gutter to the pit of Drury Lane as an Orange girl. There was a step for me! Yes. I looked like that: I behaved like that: I was as shameless as that: I used to talk to the men in the Pit as they talk—you know the kind of talk. And now, Will, confess: you are heartily ashamed of me.'

'Jenny!' Like the noble Lord, I kissed her fingers. 'Believe me, I am not in the least ashamed of you.'

'The next step was to the stage. That, Will, was pure luck. The Manager heard me imitating the actors and actresses—and himself. He saw me dancing to please the

seems very terrible. But every man, rich or poor, has to endure pain; very often pain worse than that of the lash. Certainly, the agony of the whip is not worse than that of rheumatism or gout: it is sooner over: it makes no man any the older: it does not unfit him for his work: after a day or two, he is none the worse for it. As for imprisonment; a prison, if your friends look after you, may be made, with the help of a few companions, as cheerful a place as the kitchen of the Black Jack with drinking and singing and tobacco. This kind of talk is the religion of Roguedom, and since it is so, we may cease to wonder why these people are not deterred by the severity of our punishments. For no punishment can deter when it is not feared: that is beyond question: and since after punishment the rogue is still regarded as a rogue, whom no one will employ, punishment does not convert. Nor does the prison chaplain effect any miracles in conversion, because no one listens to his exhortations.

Over against the church of St. Giles, the tavern of the Black Jack lifts its shameless head: the projecting upper windows bend threatening brows against the west end of the Church with its pillars of white stone: the house has villainy written large over all the front: it is covered with yellow places breaking away in lumps and showing the black timbers behind: the roof, of red tiles, is sunken in parts: many of the windows are broken and stuffed with rags.

The ground floor consists of a long low room: at one end is a bar with a counter, behind it casks of beer and rum and shelves with bottles containing cordials: there is a door behind the bar opening to a cellar staircase: it is said to communicate with a subterranean passage leading one knows not whither. It is also rumoured that the cellar, into which no one but the landlady of the Black

Jack and her daughter has ever penetrated, is a large stone vault with pillars and arches, the remains of some Roman Catholic building. The kitchen, or public room, is on the ground floor about twelve inches below the level of the street: it is entered by two steps: the window is garnished with red curtains, which on wintry evenings give the place a warm and cheerful look: the bright colour promises a roaring fire and lights and drink. Both in the summer and winter the place is always cheerful because it is always filled with company.

Three or four candles in sconces light up the room, and, in addition, a generous fire always burning every night, adds to the light of the place. The fire is kept up partly for warmth: partly for the convenience of those who bring their suppers with them and cook them on the fire. Also, for their convenience, frying-pans and gridirons are lying ready beside the fireplace: and for the convenience of the punch-drinkers a huge kettle bubbles on the hob. Two tables stand for those who take their supper here. As the food principally in favour consists of bloaters, red herrings, sprats, mackerel, pig's fry, pork, fat bacon, beefsteak and onions, liver and lights and other coarse but savoury dishes, the mingled fragrance makes the air delightful and refreshing. As the windows are never open the air is never free from this fragrance, added to which is the reek, or stench of old beer, rum, gin, and rank tobacco taken in the horrid manner of the lower classes, by means of a clay pipe, not in the more courtly fashion of snuff. Nor must one forget the—pah!—the company—the people themselves, the men and women, the boys and girls who frequent this tavern nightly. Taking all into account, I think it would be difficult, outside Newgate, to find a more noisome den than the kitchen or bar-room of the Black Jack.

All round the room ran a bench: the company sat on the bench, every man with a pipe of tobacco and a mug of drink: the walls were streaming: one felt inclined to run away—out into the fresh air for breath. The space in the middle was mostly kept open for a fight, perhaps: for a dance, perhaps, if a fiddler could be found. Every evening, I believe, there was a fight either between two men, or between two women: or between two boys. What would an Englishman of the baser sort become if he were forbidden to fight?

I describe what I saw after we entered. When Jenny pushed open the door and the breath of that tavern ascended to my nostrils I trembled and hesitated.

'Strong, at first, isn't it?' said Jenny. 'Cousin Will, to stand here and breathe the air that comes up carries me back to my childhood. You are ready to face it? After a little one grows accustomed. They like it, the people inside.' She stood with the handle of the half opened door in her hand. 'Now,' she said, 'you shall visit the Rogues' Delight: the Thieves' Kitchen: the Black Jack: the favourite House of Call for the gallows bird. You shall see what manner of woman is the old lady my mother: and what sort of woman is the young lady my sister.'

'I am ready, Jenny,' I replied, with an effort. One would join a forlorn hope almost as readily.

'Don't mind me. Take no notice whatever I say or do,' she whispered. 'I must humour the wretches. It is more than twelve months since I have been among them. They may resent my absence. However, you keep quiet, and say nothing. Call for drink if you like, and pretend to be an old hand in the place.'

Jenny threw up her head: opened her lips: laughed loudly and impudently: looked round her with an im-

pudent stare: became, in a word, once more, one of the brazen young queans who sell oranges and exchange rude jokes with the gentlemen in the Pit of Drury Lane Theatre. It was a wonderful change. I saw a girl who would perhaps be beautiful if she had preserved any rags or the least appearance of feminine modesty: as for Jenny's sweet and attractive look of innocence, that had vanished. She had, in fact, resumed her former self, and more than her former self. I saw her as she had been. Was there ever before known such a thing that a girl who had never been taught what was meant by feminine modesty should be able to assume, at will, the look of one brought up in a convent—all innocence and ignorance—and, at will, be able to put it off and go back to her former self? No—it is impossible: the innocence of Jenny's face proclaimed the innocence of Jenny's soul.

'Follow me,' she said. 'Keep close, or expect a pewter plate or a pot hurled at your head. They love not strangers.'

She pushed open the door: she descended the steps: I followed. The room was quite full, and the reek of it made me sick and faint for a moment. But to the worst of stinks one quickly grows hardened.

'By ——!' cried a voice from out of the smoke. 'It's Madame.'

'Lawks, Mother'—this was a girl's voice—'tis Jenny. Why, Jenny, we all thought you was grown too proud for the Black Jack.'

'Good-evening all,' she cried with a loud coarse laugh; she added, as a finishing stroke of art, a certain click or choking in the middle of the laugh such as one may hear among the lowest sort of women as they walk along the street. 'How are you, mother? You did not expect me to come in to-night, did you? How's business? How

are you, Doll? Adding up the figures on the slate as usual? How are you, boys? I haven't seen any of you at the Theatre for a spell. That's because I've been resting. Actresses must rest sometimes. Where have I been? That's my business. Who with? That's my business, too. Now'—she brandished her basket, and walked about among them shaking her petticoats in the way of the impudent orange girls—'choose a fine Chaney orange! Choose a fine Chaney orange! One for your sweetheart, my curly boy? Here is a fine one: pay me when I come again. Doll, chalk up to the gentleman an orange for his girl. One for this pretty country girl? Take it, my beauty. I will tell your fortune presently—a lover and a pile of gold and babies as sweet as this orange.' So she got rid of her oranges, offering and presenting them here and there with the impudence of the craft she assumed, yet with something of her own inimitable grace which she could not quite put off. Then she turned to me. 'Sit down here,' she ordered. 'Lads,' she said, 'I've brought you a friend of mine. He's a fiddler by trade. If you like he will fiddle for you till he puts fire into your toes and springs into your heels.'

'Who is he?' cried a voice. Through the smoke I now recognised the Bishop, formerly of the King's Bench Prison. The reverend gentleman's face was redder and his cheek fuller than when last I saw him. He seemed, however, in better case: he had gotten a new cassock: his bands and his cuffs were of whiter hue: his wig was better shaped and better dressed: it came, I make no doubt, from some place where are deposited the wigs snatched from the passengers in hackney coaches or even in the streets. His looks, however, were certainly more prosperous than when I had seen him last. He did not recognise me, which was as well. Beside him sat the Captain, also more

prosperous to all appearance. He wore a purple coat and a fawn-coloured waistcoat: he had rings on his fingers, and his hat was laced with gold: he wore gold buckles: buttons silver gilt and white silk stockings. He looked what he was—a ruffian, a robber, and a swashbuckler. He had a girl on his knee, and one arm round her waist: she was a handsome, red-faced wench dressed up in all kinds of finery, somewhat decayed and second hand. A pipe was between the gallant Captain's lips, and a glass of punch was in his right hand. 'Twas a picture of Rogues' Paradise: warmth, light, fire, clothes, drink, tobacco, good company, and a fine girl. What more can a man want?

'Who's your man?' repeated the Bishop. 'We are not going to have strangers here spying on us for what we do. Who is he?'

'Who is he? What's that to you? I shall bring anybody I like to the Black Jack. If you don't like your Company, Bishop, get up and go.' He growled, but made no attempt to rise. 'If'—she appealed to the Company generally—'I choose to bring my fancy man here, am I to ask the Bishop's leave?' Then before there was time for a reply: 'Mother, bustle about. Let every man call for what he wants. Score it to me. This evening I pay for all.'

Her mother, a fat old woman of fifty, red faced, with the look of callous indifference that belongs to such a woman, sat behind the Bar, a piece of knitting in her hand. She got up grumbling.

'Oh! ay,' she said. 'When Jenny comes you must all get drunk at her expense. She'd better give me the money to keep for her. Well—what shall it be? Doll, stir about: stir about—you leave it all to me. Ask the gentlemen what they will take. And the ladies too. Whatever they

like. Jenny pays to-night. Whatever they like—that's Jenny's way—whatever they like so that it ruins my poor girl.'

Doll, the other daughter, made no response. She was continually occupied with the slate, and I suppose she was slow at calculation, for she kept adding up over and over again, wiping out with her wet finger and adding up again. The Black Jack refused credit as a rule: most of the company had to pay for what they called for on the spot; but there were a few to whom limited credit was granted, as a privilege.

The girl called Doll, I remarked, was not in the least like her sister. She had black hair and a somewhat swarthy complexion and appeared to belong, as indeed she did, to the people called gipsies. The mother had also the same black hair and dark skin. Strange, that a girl of Jenny's complexion with her fair hair, blue eyes, and peach-like skin, should come of the same stock. I sought in vain for any likeness between Jenny and this girl. I thought that she might present the same features with a difference; debased: but I could find none. She wore a red kerchief tied round her head, a red ribbon tied round her neck: a red scarf tied round her waist. In her way she was a handsome girl: in her manners she showed no inclination to oblige the company or to be civil to them. She paid no heed when her mother bade her stir about. On the contrary, she went on with her sums on the slate.

It was Jenny who ran round laughing and joking with the men, ordering punch for one and gin for another. Most of the company regarded her with bewilderment. It was long since she had been among them: they knew something about her: she was the daughter of the house: she had been an orange girl at Drury: she had been a fine actress at the same theatre: some of them had seen her

there: then she disappeared, and no one knew where she was.

One young fellow there was who sat on the bench with hanging head. He had apparently no friends among the company. 'Here,' cried Jenny, 'is a lad half awake. What art doing here, friend?' The lad shook his head mournfully. 'Hast any money?' He shook his head again. Jenny pulled out a piece of silver. 'Go,' she said. 'Get food, and'—she whispered—'come back here no more. Go—get thee home again.' And so, let me believe, she saved one lad that night from the gallows. For he got up slowly and walked out.

There was another lad also from the country whose fresh cheek and country dress betokened the fact. He sat sheepishly, as a new comer.

Jenny stopped before him. 'And pray what do they call thee, Sirrah? Jack? 'Twill serve. What lay is it, Jack? Oh! Shoplifting?' He nodded. 'For Mr. Merridew?' she whispered. He nodded again. 'Drink punch, Jack, and forget thyself awhile.'

Some of the men were dressed like the Captain, but not so fine: the buttons had been cut off their coats and their shoes had lost the buckles. There were boys among them: boys, who had none of the innocence of childhood; their faces betrayed a life of hunting and being hunted: they were always on the prowl for prey or were running away and hiding. They had all been whipped, held under the pump, thrown into ponds, clapped in prison. They were all doomed to be hanged. In their habits of drink as in their crimes, they were grown up. In truth there were no faces in the whole room which looked more hopeless than those of the boys.

The women, of whom there were nearly as many as there were men, were either bedizened in tawdry finery

or they were in rags: some wearing no more than a frock stiffened by the accumulation of years, black leather stays, and a kerchief for the neck with another for the head: their hair hung about their shoulders loose; and undressed: it was not unbecoming in the young, but in the older women it became what is called rats' tails. With most of the men, their dress was simple and scanty. Shirts were scarce: stockings without holes in them were rare: buttons had mostly vanished.

Most of them, I observed further, had an anxious, hungry look: not the look of a creature of prey, which has always in it something that is noble: but the look of one insufficiently fed. I believe that the ordinary lot of the rogue is, even on this earth, miserable beyond expression: uncertain as to food: cruelly hard in cold weather in the matter of raiment.

In a little while they were all happy: happier, I am sure, than they had been for a long time. While they drank and while they talked, I observed among them a veritable brotherhood. The most successful rogue—he in gold lace—was hail fellow with the most ragged. And although the successful rogue stood the nearest to the gallows, and he knew it and the other rogue knew it, yet the beginner envied the success of his brother as a soldier envies the successful general. They drank and laughed: they drank more and they laughed more. Then the Captain called silence for a song.

'Now, you fiddler!' he cried with a curse. 'Sit up, man, and show us how you can play.'

The tune, the Captain told me, was 'The Warbling of the Lark.' I struck up that air which every frequenter of Vauxhall, or even the Dog and Duck, knows very well, and the Captain began his song.

Now in such a company I expected a song in praise of

Roguery and Robbery; or at least something of the kind introduced in Gay's Opera. On the contrary, the song which the Captain gave us was a sentimental ditty which you may hear at any Pleasure Garden on a summer evening: it was all about the flames of love which could only be extinguished by Chloe: and a broken heart: and darts and groves, and, in fact, a song such as would be sung in a concert before a party of ladies. The fellow had a good voice, and rolled out his lovesick strains to the admiration of the women, some of whom even shed tears. This is the kind of song they like: not the song in praise of a Highwayman's life, because in matters of imagination these women are but poorly provided, and they always see the reality beyond the words, and if they love the man his certain end makes them unhappy. But hearts, and flames and love! That, if you please, which is unreal, seems real.

When he finished, Jenny sprang to her feet. 'I will dance for you, lads.' She turned to me. 'Play up—the Hey.'

She ran into the middle of the room, bowed to the people as if she had been on the stage, and danced with such grace and freedom and simplicity that it ravished my heart. Her sister, I observed, went on adding up figures on the slate without paying the least attention to the performance.

'Ah!' said her mother, growing confidential. 'Thus would she dance when she was quite a little thing on the stones in front of the church, when the fiddler played in the house. A clever girl, she was, even then, a clever girl! You are her friend. I hope, Sir, that you are going to behave handsome by my girl. You look like one of the right sort. Make over, while there is time. I will keep the swag for you—you may trust the poor girl's mother. Many a brave fellow she might have had: many a brave fellow: they come and go—— I wish you a long rope,

young man, if so be you're kind to my girl. Life is short —what odds, so long as 'tis merry? Where do you work, if I may ask?'

'Jenny will tell you, perhaps,' I replied.

'I don't know, I don't know. Since she left off the orange line, Jenny hasn't been the same to her old mother: not to tell her things, I mean, and to take her advice. I should have made her rich by this time if she had taken my advice.'

'Many people like to have their own way, don't they?'

'They do, Sir—they do—to their loss.' She took another pull at the punch and began to get maudlin and to shed tears—while she enlarged upon what she would have done had Jenny only listened to her. I gathered from her discourse that the old gipsy woman, like the whole of her tribe, was without a gleam or a spark of virtue or goodness. Her nature was sordid and depraved through and through. With such a mother—poor Jenny!

Suddenly the old woman stopped short and sat upright with a look of terror.

'Good Lord!' she murmured. 'It's Mr. Merridew!'

At sight of the new-comer standing on the steps a dead silence fell upon the whole Company. All knew him by name: those who knew his face whispered to each other: all quailed before him: down to the meanest little pick-pocket, they knew him and feared him. Every face became white; even the faces of the women, who shook with terror on account of the men. I observed the girl on the Captain's knee catch him by the hand and place herself in front of him, as if to save him. Then his arm left her waist and she slipped down and sat humbly on the bench beside her man. Thus there was some human affection among these poor things. But the Captain's face blanched with terror

and the glass that he was lifting to his lips remained half-way on its journey. The Bishop's face could not turn white, in any extremity of fear, but it became yellow—while his eyes rolled about and he grasped the table beside him in his agitation. Doll, I observed, after a glance to learn the cause of the sudden silence went on sucking her fingers, rubbing out the figures on the slate and adding them up again.

'Who is it?' I whispered to Jenny.

'Hush! It's the thief-taker: they are all afraid that their time has come. If he wants one of them he will have to get up and go.'

'Won't they fight, then? Do they sit still to be taken?'

'Fight Mr. Merridew? As well walk straight to Tyburn.'

The man was a large and heavy creature, having something of the look of a prosperous farmer. His face, however, was coarse and brutal. And he looked round the terrified room as if he was selecting a pig from a herd, with as much pity and no more! This was the man whose perjuries had added a new detainer to my imprisonment. I could have fallen upon him with the first weapon handy, but refrained.

He came into the room. 'Your place stinks, Mother,' he said, 'and it's so thick with tobacco and the steam of the punch that a body can't see across.'

'To be sure, Mr. Merridew,' the old woman apologised. 'If we'd known you were coming——'

'There would have been a large company, would there not?'

'Well, Sir, you see us here, as we are, as orderly and peaceful a house as your Worship would desire.'

The fellow grinned. 'Orderly, truly, mother. It is a quiet and a well-conducted company, isn't it? These are

quiet and well-conducted girls, are they not?' He chucked one of the girls under the chin.

'As much as you like—there,' said the girl, impudently, 'so long as you keep your fingers off my neck.'

At this playful allusion to his profession, that of sending people to the gallows, Mr. Merridew laughed and patted the girl on the cheek. 'My dear,' he said, 'if you were on my list you should get rich and you should have the longest rope of any one.'

'The man,' Jenny told me afterwards, 'is the greatest villain in the whole world. He is a thief-taker by profession.'

'You mean, he informs and takes the reward.'

'Yes: but he makes the thing which he sells. He lays traps for pickpockets and such small fry, and while he has them in his power he encourages them to become bigger rogues who will be worth more to him. Do you understand? A highwayman is worth about eighty pounds reward to him: a man returned from transportation before his time is worth no more than forty. He does not therefore give up the returned convict until he has returned to his highway robberies. All those fellows you saw last night are in his power. The Captain is a returned convict whose time must before long be up, for Merridew only allows a certain amount of rope. He says he cannot afford more. As for the Bishop, he will go on longer: he is useful in many other ways: he can write letters and forge things and invent villainies: he persuades the young fellows to take to the road. I think he will be suffered to go on as long as his powers last.'

'Why was your mother so terrified?'

Jenny hesitated. 'Because—I told you, but you do not understand—because she, too, is in his power for

receiving stolen goods. My mother is what they call a fence. Oh!' she shook herself impatiently: 'they are all rogues together. I wonder I can ever hold up my head. To think of the Black Jack and the Company there!'

The Captain sprang to his feet with an effort at ease and politeness. 'What will your Honour think of us?' he cried. 'Gentlemen, Mr. Merridew is thirsty and no one offers him a drink. Call for it, sir—call for the best this house affords.'

'Punch, mother,' the great man replied. 'Thank you, Captain.'

Then the Bishop, not to be outdone, got up too. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'let us all drink to the health of Mr. Merridew. He is our truest friend. Now, gentlemen. Together. After me.' He held up his hand. They watched the sign and all together drank and shouted—hollow shouts they were—to the health of the man who was going to sell them all to the hangman. I wondered that they had not run upon him with their knives and despatched him as he stood before them, unarmed. But this they dared not do.

Mr. Merridew acknowledged the compliment. 'Boys and gallant riders,' he said, 'I thank you. There *was* a friend of ours whom I expected to find here, but I do not see him.' He looked round the room curiously. I think he enjoyed the general terror. 'No matter, I shall find him at the Spotted Dog.'

Every one breathed relief. No one, then, of that company was wanted. The Captain sat down and drank off a whole glass of punch: the rest of the men looked at each other as sailors might look whose ship has just scraped the rock.

'I like to look in, friendly, as it might be,' Mr.

Merridew went on, 'especially when I don't want anybody—just to see you enjoying yourselves, happy and comfortable together, as you should be. There's no profession more happy and comfortable, is there? That's what I always say, even to the ungrateful. Plenty to eat · no work to do: no masters over you: girls, and drink, and music, and dancing, every night. Find me another trade half so prosperous. Mother, I'll take a second glass of punch. I drink your healths—all of you—Bless you!' The fellow looked so brutal, and so cunning that I longed to kill him as one would kill a noxious beast.

'A long rope and a merry life,' he went on. 'It is not my fault, gentlemen, that the rope is not longer. The expenses are great and the profits are small. Meantime, go on and prosper. You are all safe under my care. Without me, who knows what would happen to all this goodly company? A long rope, I say, and a merry life.'

He tossed off his glass and went out.

When he was gone, the talk began again, but it was flat. The mirth had gone out of the party. It was as if the Angel of Death himself had passed through the room.

I played to them, but only the boys would dance Jenny asked them to sing, but only the girls would sing, and, truth to say, the poor creatures' efforts were not musical. They drank, but moodily. The Captain took glass after glass, but his arm had left the girl's waist: she now sat neglected on the bench beside him. The Bishop, sobered by the fright, said nothing, but sat with his eyes fixed upon the sanded floor, shuddering. He thought his time had come, and the shock made him for the moment reflect. Yet what was the good of reflecting? They were in the hands of a relentless monster: he would sell them when it was worth his while to put younger men in their place. They tried to forget this, but from time to time,

his presence, or the absence of one of their Company, reminded them and then they were subdued for a time. It filled me with pity: it made me think a little better of them that they should be capable of being thus affected.

Jenny touched my arm. 'Come,' she said. 'Let us be gone.' So without any farewells she led the way out. The old woman, by this time, was sound asleep beside her half finished glass · and Doll was still adding up the figures on her slate, putting her finger in her mouth, rubbing out and adding up again.

Outside, the tall white spire of St. Giles looked down upon us. In the churchyard the white tombs stood in peace, and overhead the moon sailed in splendour.

Jenny drew a long breath: she caught one of the rails of the churchyard and looked in curiously.

'Will,' she said, shuddering, 'I am ashamed of myself because the manners and the talk come back to me so easily. Once I am with them, I become one of them again. I tremble when the man Merridew appears. It is as if he will do me, too, a mischief some day. I cannot forget the old times and the old talk. Yet I know how dreadful it is. Look at the graves, Will. Under them they sleep so quiet: they never move: they don't hear anything: and beside them every night collects this company of gaol-birds and Tyburn birds. Why, they don't shiver and shake when Mr. Merridew looks in.'

'Let us get back, Jenny.' I shuddered, like all the rest.

'Will, I have seen that man — that monster — that wretch—for whom no punishment is enough—three times. Each time I have felt that, like the rest of those poor rogues, my own life was in his hands. Do you think he can do me a mischief? Why do I ask? I know that he will. I am never wrong.'

'What mischief, Jenny, could he do?'

'I don't know. It is a prophetic feeling. But who knows what such a villain may be concocting? Good-night, you happy people in the graves. Good-night.'

I drew her away, and walked with her to her own door in the Square.

'Will,' she asked, 'what do you think of me now?'

'Whatever I think, Jenny, I am all wonder and admiration that you are—what you are—when I see—what you might have been.'

She burst into tears. She flung her empty basket out into the road. 'Oh,' she cried, 'if I could escape from them! If I could only escape from them for ever! I should think nothing too terrible if only I could escape from them!'

A month or two later I remembered those words. Nothing too terrible if only she could escape from them!

CHAPTER VI.

A WARNING AND ANOTHER OFFER.

As soon as we had once more found the means of keeping ourselves we went back to our former abode under the shadow of Lambeth Church on the Bank looking over the river on one side and over the meadows and orchards of Lambeth Marsh on the other. The air which sweeps up the river with every tide is fresh and strong and pure; good for the child, not to speak of the child's mother, while the people, few in number, are generally honest though humble: for the most part they are fishermen.

Here I should have been happy but for the thought, suggested by Jenny, that my cousin and his attorney Probus were perhaps devising some new means of persecu-

tion, and that the man Merridew, who had perjured himself concerning me already, whose sinister face I had gazed upon with terror, so visibly was the mark of Cain stamped upon it, was but a tool of the attorney.

Yet what could they devise? If they swore between them another debt, my patron Jenny promised to provide me with the help of a lawyer. What else could they do? It is a most miserable feeling that someone in the world is plotting your destruction, you know not how.

However, on Sunday afternoon—it was in November, when the days are already short, we had a visit from my father's old clerk, Ramage.

He was restless in his manner: he was evidently in some anxiety of mind. After a few words he began:

'Mr. Will,' he said, 'I have much to say. I have come, I fear, to tell you something that will make you uneasy.'

'I will leave you alone,' said Alice, taking up the child.

'No, Madam, no, I would rather that you heard. You may advise. Oh! Madam, I never thought the day would come that I should reveal my master's secrets. I eat his bread; I take his wages: and I am come here to betray his most private affairs.'

'Then do not betray them, Mr. Ramage,' said Alice. 'Follow your own conscience.'

'It ought to be your bread and your wages, Mr. Will, and would have been but for tales and inventions. Sir, in a word, there is villainy afloat——'

'What kind of villainy?'

'I know all they do. Sir, there is that sum of one hundred thousand pounds in the hands of trustees, payable to the survivor of you two. That is the bottom of the whole villainy. Well, they are mad to make you sell your chance.'

'I know that.'

'Mr. Matthew, more than a year ago, offered Mr. Probus a thousand pounds if he could persuade you to sell it for three thousand.'

'That is why he was so eager.' This was exactly how Jenny read the business.

'Yes. He reported that you would not sell, he said that if it was made worth his while, he would find a way to make you.'

'That is why he put me in the King's Bench, I suppose?'

'That was agreed upon between them. Sir, if ever there was an infamous conspiracy, this was one. Probus invented it. He said that he would keep you there till you rotted; he said that when you had been there four or five months you would be glad to get out on any terms. You were there for a year and more. Probus sent people to report how you were looking. He told Mr. Matthew with sorrow that you were looking strong and hearty. Then you were taken out. They were furious. They knew not who was the friend. An attorney named Dewberry had done it. That was all they could find out. I know not what this Mr. Dewberry said to Mr. Probus, but certain I am that they will not try that plan any more.'

'I am glad to hear so much.'

'Mr. Will, there is more behind. I know very well what goes on, I say. A little while after the death of your father, when the Alderman retired and Mr. Matthew was left sole active partner, he began to borrow money of Mr. Probus, who came often to see him. I could hear all they said from my desk in the corner of the outer counting house.'

'Ay! Ay! I remember your desk.'

'Sitting there I heard every word. And I am glad, Mr. Will—I ought to be ashamed, but I am glad that I

listened. Well. He began to borrow money of Mr. Probus at 15 per cent., on the security of the business. Anyone would lend money to such a house at 10 per cent. He said he wanted to put the money into the business; to buy new ships and to develop it. This made me suspicious. Why? Because our House, in your father's time, Sir, wanted no fresh capital; it developed and grew on its own capital. This I knew. The business wanted no new capital. What did he borrow the money for then?'

'I know not, indeed.'

'He bought no new ships: he never meant to buy any. Mr. Will, to my certain knowledge'—here his voice deepened to a whisper, 'he wanted for some reason or other more ready money. I am certain that he has got through all the money that your father left him: I know that he has sold some of the ships: he has mortgaged the rest; the business of the House decays and sinks daily; he has got rid of all the money that Mr. Probus advanced him. It was £25,000, for which he is to pay 15 per cent. on £40,000. 'Tis a harpy—a shark—a common rogue!'

'How has he lost this money?' I pretended not to know: but, as you have heard, I knew, perfectly well.

'That, Sir, I cannot tell you. I have no knowledge how a man can, in three years, get through such an amazing amount of money and do so much mischief to an old established business. But the case is as I tell you.'

'This is very serious, Ramage. Does my uncle know?'

'He does not, Sir. That poor man will be a bankrupt in his old age. It will kill him. It will kill him. And I must not tell him. Remember that most of what I tell you is what I overheard.'

'I think that my uncle ought to know.' I remembered Jenny's advice. Here was another opportunity. I should have told him. But I neglected this chance as well.

own occasions. Now Mr. Matthe
he often goes to the tavern of a for
a red face and heavy shoulders.
had been drinking more than was u
wise, he might not have been so
creditor. "Mr. Probus," he said, "
truth with you. I cannot pay yo
money—either to-day or at any othe

'"Cannot . . . cannot . . . pay?
do you mean?"

'"I say, Sir, that I cannot pay
that your principal, the money you
£25,000—is gone. You'll never get
then he laughed scornfully. I heard
he sprang to his feet, I heard him
his open hand. His face I could not

'"Sir," he cried, "explain. Wher

'"Gone, I say. Everything is
my money; all that I could raise-
the business is gone: the creditors ar
I shall be a bankrupt in less than

'"It is gone—I tell you—all gone—my money, Probus—*integer vitæ*—that's gone: and your money, old Scelerisque Probus. That's gone too. All gone—all gone." To be sure he was three parts drunk. I heard Mr. Probus groan and sink back into his chair. Then he got up again. "Tell me," he said again, "tell me, you poor drivelling drunken devil—I'll kill you if you laugh. Tell me, where is the money gone?"

'"I don't know," his voice was thick with drink, "I don't know. It's all gone. Everything's gone."

'"I lent you the money to put into the business—it must be in the business still."

'"It never was in the business. I tell you, Probus—it's all gone."

'There was silence for a few minutes. Then Mr. Probus said softly, "Mr. Halliday, we are old friends—tell me that you have only been playing off a joke upon me. You are a little disguised in liquor. I can pass over this accident. The money is in the business, you know; in this fine old business, where you put it when you borrowed it."

'"It's all gone—all gone," he repeated. "Man, why won't you believe? I tell you that everything is gone. Make me a bankrupt at once, and you will share with the creditors: oh! yes, you will be very lucky: you will divide between you the furniture of the counting-house and the empty casks on the Quay."

'Then Mr. Probus began to curse and to swear, and to threaten. He would throw Mr. Matthew into prison and keep him there all his life: he would prosecute him at the Old Bailey: he called him thief, scoundrel, villain: Mr. Matthew laughed in his drunken mood. He would not explain how the money was lost: he only repeated that it was gone—all gone.

'Mr. Will—I know that he was speaking the truth. I

had seen things done—you cannot hide things from an old accountant who keeps the books: cargoes sold at a sacrifice for ready money: ships sold: our splendid fleet thrown away: there were six tall vessels in the West India trade: one was cast away: the underwriters paid for her. Where is that money? Where are the other five ships? Sold. Where is that money? Our coffers are empty: there is no running cash at the Bank: the wharf is deserted: clerks are dismissed: creditors are put off. I know that what Mr. Matthew said was true: but for the life of me I cannot tell what he has done with the money unless he has thrown it into the river.

'Then I think that Mr. Matthew took more drink, for he made no more reply, and Mr. Probus, after calling him hog and beast and other names of like significance, left him.

'When he came out of the counting-house he was like one possessed of a devil: his face distorted: his eyes bloodshot: his lips moving: his hands trembling. Sir, although he is a villain I felt sorry for him. He has lost all that he cared for: all that he valued: and since he is now old, and can make no more money, he has lost perhaps his means of livelihood.'

Ramage paused. Alice brought him a glass of beer, her own home-brewed. Thus refreshed, he presently went on again.

'After two days Probus came again to the counting-house. Mr. Matthew was sober.

'"Probus," he said, "I told you the other day when I was drunk what I should have kept from you if I was sober. However, now you know what I told you was the truth."

'"Is it all true?"

'"It is all true. Everything is gone."

'"But how—how—how?" I heard his lamentable cry and I could imagine his arm waving about.

'"This way and that way. Enough that it is all gone."

'"Mr. Matthew," I think he sat down because he groaned—which a man cannot do properly—that is to say, movingly, unless he is sitting—"I have been thinking—Good God! of what else could I think? You can keep yourself afloat for three months more, you say—Heavens! Halliday Brothers to go in three months! And my money! Where—where—where has it gone?"

'"In about three months—or may be sooner, the end must come."

'"Mr. Matthew," he lowered his voice, "there is one chance left—one chance—I may get back my money—by that one chance."

'"What chance? The money is all gone."

'"If we can make your cousin part with his chance of the succession, we can raise money on it before the bankruptcy—we can divide it between us."

'"Put it out of your thoughts. My cousin is the most obstinate self-willed brute that ever lived. You couldn't bend him with the King's Bench Prison. You cannot bend him now."

'"I will try again. He is still poor. He plays the fiddle at some wretched gardens I believe. He lives where he did before—I know where to find him. I will try again. If I succeed we could raise say £50,000 upon the succession—it should be more, but you are both young. Let me see, that will be £40,000 for me; £6,000 interest due to me: that makes £46,000 for me and £4,000 for you."

'"No, friend Probus. You have lent me £25,000. That you shall take and no more. If you are not content with that you shall have none. Remember that the money must be raised by me for my own use, not by you. Get him to sign if you can—and you shall have back all your money, but without any interest. If you think you are

going to get all this money for yourself, let me tell you that you are mistaken."

'Mr. Matthew can be as hard as—as your father, sometimes. He was hard now. Well, the pair wrangled over these terms for a long time. At last it was arranged that if Mr. Probus can persuade you to sign the paper which he is to bring you he is to take his £25,000 and interest on that and not on the alleged £40,000, at 15 per cent. And Mr. Matthew is to pay you the sum required to buy you out. When they had completed this arrangement Mr. Probus started another line of discourse. Now listen to this, Mr. Will, because it concerns you very closely.

'"If," he said, "your cousin were to die—actually to die——"

'"He won't die. I wish he would."

'"I said—If he were to die—you would then immediately take over £100,000, together with the interest at 5 per cent. already accumulated for three years, namely, about £115,000. That would put all square again. You could get back some of your ships and your credit."

'"What's the use? Man, I have told you—My cousin is a selfish, unfeeling, obstinate Brute. He won't die."

'"I said—If he were to die. That is what I said. If he were to die."

'Then there was silence for a space.

'"Probus," said Mr. Matthew, "I believe you are a devil. Tell me what you mean. We can't make him die by wishing."

'"I was only supposing: If he were to die—strange things have happened—would you be disposed to let me take the half of that money—say £55,000?"

'"If he were to die," Mr. Matthew repeated. "Have you heard, by accident, that he is ill? Has he taken

small-pox, or gaol fever? I did hear that gaol fever was in Newgate some time ago."

'"No: on the contrary, I believe that he is in perfect health at present. Still, he might die. Anybody may die, you know."

'"Why do you say that he may die?"

'"I only put the case. Anybody may die. What do you say about my proposal?"

'"You call it a proposal—Man—you look like a murderer—are you going to murder him?"

'"Certainly not. Well—what do you say?"

'"Well—if you are not going to murder him, what do you mean?"

'"Men die of many complaints, besides murder. Some men get themselves into the clutches of the law——"'

When Ramage said this, I became suddenly aware of a great gulf opening at my feet, with a prospect of danger such as I had never before contemplated. I thought that the man might swear upon me some crime of which I was innocent and so bring it home to me by a diabolical artifice that I should be accused, found guilty, and executed. I reeled and turned pale.

Alice caught my hand. 'Have faith, my dear,' she said.

Yet the thought was like a knife piercing me through and through. I could not afterwards shake it off. And I made up my mind—I know not why—that the charge would take the form of an accusation of forgery.

'"Probus," said Mr. Matthew, "I will have nothing to do with this——"

'"Sir, you need not. Give me your word only, your simple word that if your cousin refuses to sign the paper I shall lay before him, so that you cannot raise money on that succession—and if within two months of this day your cousin dies, so that you will succeed before you are

bankrupt, I am to take half that money in full discharge of all my claims. That is all. I will leave you now, to think the matter over."

'He went away. The next day he returned, bringing with him a man whom I had never seen before.

'"Mr. Matthew," he said, "I have brought you a gentleman whose acquaintance with our criminal law is vast—probably unequalled. His name, Sir, is Merridew."

'"His honour says no more than what is true," said Mr. Merridew. "I know more than most. I understand you want me to advise you on a little matter of prosecution. Well, Sir, I can only say that if you want a friend put out of the way, so to speak, nothing is easier, for them that knows how to work the job and can command the instruments. It is only a question of pay." Then they talked in whispers and I heard no more. When they were gone Mr. Matthew began to drink again.

'That is all, Mr. Will. But have a care. You now know what to expect, sir; there will be no pity from any of them. Have a care. Go away. Go to some place where they cannot find you. Sir, the man Probus is mad. He is mad with the misery of losing his money. There is nothing that he will not do. He is a money-lender: his money is all in all to him: his profession and his pride and everything. And he has lost his money. Go out of his way.'

'Is that all, Ramage?'

'Yes, Sir. That is all I had to say.'

'Then, my old friend, you have come just in time, for if I mistake not there is Mr. Probus himself walking across the meadow with the intention of calling here. You could not have chosen a better time.' Indeed, that was the case. The man was actually walking quickly across the Marsh. 'Now, Ramage,' I said, 'it would be well for

you to hear what he has to say. Go into the kitchen and wait with the door ajar—go. Alice, my dear, stay here with me.'

'Remember, Will,' she said, 'it was your father's last command. To sell it would be to sell your father's forgiveness—a dreadful thing.'

The man stood at the open door. Ramage was right. He looked truly dreadful. Anxiety was proclaimed in his face, with eagerness and courage: he reminded me of a weasel, which for murderous resolution is said to surpass the whole of the animal creation. He came in blinking after the light and offered me his hand, but I refused it.

'Fie!' he said. 'Fie, Mr. Will! This is ill done. You confuse the attorney's zeal for his clients with an act of hostility to yourself. Put that out of your thonghts, I pray.'

'Why do you come here, Mr. Probus?'

'I said to myself: It is not easy to catch a man of Mr. William's reputation at home, his society being eagerly sought after. I will therefore visit him on Sunday. Not in the morning, when he will be lifting the hymn in Church: but in the afternoon. I came here straight from St. George's, Borough, where I sometimes repair for morning service. A holy discourse, Mr. William, moving and convincing.' His eyes kept shifting to and fro as he spoke.

'Very likely. But we will not talk about sermons. Look ye, Mr. Probus, your presence here is not desired. Say what you have to say, and begone.'

'Hot youth! Ah! I envy that fine heat of the blood. Once I was just the same myself.'

He must have been a good deal changed, then, since that time.

He went on. 'I will not stay long. I am once more

a peacemaker. It is a happy office. It is an office that can be discharged on the Sabbath. Sweetly the river flows beneath your feet. Ah! A peacemaker. I come from your cousin again.'

'To make another offer?'

'Yes, that is my object. I am again prepared to offer you terms which, I believe, no one else in the world would propose to you. Mr. William, I will give you the sum of £4,000 down—equivalent to an annual income of £200 a year if you will sell your reversion.'

'No.'

'Mr. Matthew can use the money to advantage: while it lies locked up it is of no use to anyone.'

'No.'

'Such obstinacy was never known before, I believe. Why, Sir, I offer you an annual income of £200 a year—£200 a year. You can leave this wretched little cottage overhanging a marsh: you can move into a fashionable quarter, and live like a person of Quality: you can abandon your present mode of life, which I take to be repellent to every person of virtue—that of musician to the Dog and Duck or some other resort of the profligate. Oh, we know where you are and what you do! Instead of servant you will be master. You, Madam, will no longer be a household drudge: you will have your cook, your maids, your page to carry your Prayer-Book to church.'

'No.'

He hesitated a little, the sham benevolence dying out of his face, and the angry look of baffled cunning taking its place. Mr. Probus was a bad actor.

He took out a parchment. 'Sign it, Mr. William—here.' He unrolled it and indicated the place. 'Let us have no more shilly shally, willy nilly talk. It is for your good and for my client's.'

'And yours, too, Mr. Probus.'

'My dear,' said Alice, 'do not exchange words any longer. You have said No already. It is my husband's last word, Sir.'

There I should have stopped. It is always foolish to reveal to an enemy what one has discovered. I think that up to that moment Mr. Probus was only anxious: that is to say, he was crazy with anxiety, but he could not believe that his money was all gone, because he had no knowledge or suspicion in what way it had gone. Things that appear impossible cannot be believed. I think that he would have assured himself of the fact in some other way before proceeding to the wickedness which he actually had in his mind. He would have waited: and I could have eluded him some way or other. As it was, the mere statement of Matthew drunk drove him half mad with fear: but there was still the chance that Matthew sober would have spoken differently.

'No,' according to Alice, was my last word.

'Not quite the last word,' I said. 'Hark ye, Mr. Probus. The sum waiting for me when Matthew dies, is £100,000 with accumulations of interest, is it not? If he were to die to-morrow—to be sure it is not likely—but he may be murdered, or he may put himself within the power of the Law and so be executed——' Mr. Probus turned ghastly white and shook all over. 'Then I should come in for the whole of that money, which is much better than £4,000, whereas if I were to die to-morrow—either by the operation of the law or by some other manner, Matthew would have the whole and you would get back the £25,000 you have lent my cousin with a noble addition. If you do get it, that is—Mr. Probus, I think that you will not get it. I think you will never get any more of your money back at all.'

'I don't know, Sir, what you mean: or what you know,' he stammered.

'I know more than you think. I know where your money has gone.'

He jumped up. 'Where? Where? Where? Tell me.'

'It has gone into the bottomless gulf that they call the gaming table, Mr. Probus. It has been gambled away: the ships of my father's fleet: the cargoes: the accumulated treasures: the credit of the business: the private fortune of my cousin: your own money lent to Matthew: it has all gone: irrecoverably gone——'

'The gaming table!' he groaned. 'The gaming table! I never thought of that. Sir, do you know what you mean—the gaming table?'

No one but a money-lender knows all that may be meant by the gaming table.

'I know what I say. Matthew told you the truth. Everything has gone: ruin stares him in the face—— Your money is gone with the rest.'

'The gaming table. And I never suspected it. . . . The gaming table!' He fell into a kind of trance or fit, with open mouth, white cheeks, and fixed eyes. This lasted only for a few moments.

'Mr. Probus,' I went on, 'I cannot say that I am sorry for your misfortunes; but I hope we shall never meet again.'

He got up, slowly. His face was full of despair. I confess that I pitied him. For he gave way altogether to a madness of grief.

'Gone?' he cried. 'No—no—no—not gone—it can't be gone.' He threw himself into a chair and buried his face in his hands. He sobbed: he moaned: when he lifted his head again his features were distorted. 'It is my all,' he cried. 'Oh! you don't know what it is to

lose your all. I can never get any more—I am old: I have few clients left—I get no new ones: the old cannot get new clients: my character is not what it was: they cry out after me in the street: they say I lend money at cent. per cent.—why not? They call me old cent. per cent. If I lose this money I am indeed lost.'

'We cannot help you, Mr. Probus.'

'Oh! yes, do what I ask you. Sell your chance. You will never outlive your cousin. You will save my life. Think of saving a man's life. As for your cousin, let him go his own way. I hate him. It is you, you, Mr. William, I have always loved.'

'No.'

He turned to Alice and fell on his knees.

'Persuade him, Madam. You are all goodness. Oh! persuade him—think of your child. You can make him rich with a stroke of a pen—think of that. Oh! think of that!' The tears ran down his cheeks.

'Sir, I think only of my husband's father. And of his wishes, which are commands.'

'Enough said'—there was too much said already—'your money is gone, Mr. Probus.'

'Gone?' he repeated, but no longer in terms of entreaty. He was now fallen into the other extreme; he was blind and mad with rage and despair. 'No—no—it's not gone. I will get it out of you. Those who threw you into prison can do worse—worse. You have brought it on yourself. It is your ruin or mine. Once more——' With trembling fingers he held out the paper for me to sign.

'No.'

He stayed no longer: he threw out his arms again: it was as if his breath refused to come: and he turned away. He looked like a broken-down man, crawling, bent, with hanging head, along the road.

As soon as he was gone, Ramage opened the door and came out cautiously.

'Mr. Will,' he cried. 'For Heaven's sake, sir. For your dear lady's sake: for the child's sake: get out of the way. Nothing else will serve. He is desperate: and he is as cunning as the Devil himself. To get back his money he will shrink from nothing.'

'Indeed, Ramage,' I said, 'I think you are right. I will take a holiday for awhile.'

'When the bankruptcy comes,' he said, 'there will be no more danger, because all the money would be divided among the creditors. Better to run away than to be ruined.'

I promised to think of flight. Indeed, my mind was shaken. I was not afraid of open villainy, but of that which might be concealed and designed in secret. It would perhaps be best to go where the man could not find me.

So Ramage departed. When he saw me again, it was in a very different place.

The bell of Lambeth Church began to toll. It seemed to me like a funeral knell, though it was the bell for the afternoon service. The wind came up from the river chilled with the November air. My heart sank.

'My dear,' said Alice, 'let us go to Church. Oh! the mark of the Evil Spirit is stamped upon the unhappy man's forehead. Let us pray not for ourselves, but for God's mercy upon a wandering soul.'

I followed her as she led the way, carrying the child. Alas! How long before I could sit with her again to hear the prayers of the church among godly folk!

CHAPTER VII.

JENNY'S ADVICE.

After this plain warning: after knowing the nature of the design against me: after the savage threats of the man Probus: I ought to have hesitated no longer: I should have taken Alice and the child to her brother Tom, and should then have retired somewhere until the inevitable bankruptcy relieved me from fear of conspiracy. Once before, I had suffered from delay: yet had I not learned the perils of procrastination. I had formed in my mind an idea that they would try in some way to fix upon me the crime of forgery, and I thought that this would take time: so that I was not hurried: I confess that I was disquieted: but I was not hurried.

On Monday morning I repaired to Soho Square and laid the whole business before Jenny.

'Will,' she said, after hearing all and asking a few questions, 'this seems a very serious affair. You have to deal with a man driven frantic by the loss of all his money: the money that he has spent his life in scraping together. He throws out hints about your possible death in the counting-house, and makes a bargain in case you die: he threatens you with some mysterious revenge.'

'I believe he will trump up some charge of forgery.'

'He is quite unscrupulous. Now, I will tell you something. The man Merridew's perjury about your alleged debt put me on the scent. Probus works through Merridew. First of all Merridew owes him money—more than he can pay. This debt goes on rolling up. This puts Merridew in his power. What Probus orders Merridew must do.'

'Is there always behind every villain a greater villain?'

'I suppose so. The greater the rogue the safer he is. Merridew goes to the shopkeepers and offers to return them stolen goods—at a price. It is one of his ways of making money. Then he finds out their necessities. Most shopkeepers are always in want of money. Then Merridew takes them to Probus, who lends them money. Oh! at first there was never such a kind friend—on the easiest terms: they can pay when they please: then they want a little more: and so they go on. When their debt has risen to half the value of their stock, Probus wants to be paid. Then he sells them up. The father of the family becomes bankrupt and goes into a prison for the rest of his days: what becomes of the children I know not—no one knows. I dare say some of them go to St. Giles's.'

This is what Jenny told me. I know not if it is true, but I think it must be.

'Well, you see that Probus pulls the strings and sets Merridew's arms and legs at work, and Merridew has all the rogues under his thumb. Now you understand why the position is serious.'

She considered for a few minutes. 'Will,' she said, 'for sure they will talk it over at the Black Jack. When anything is arranged it is generally done in the kitchen and in the morning.' She looked at the clock. 'It is now nearly one. If I were to go round!' She considered again. 'Doll will be there. They may be there too. But this time they must not recognise me. Wait a bit, Will.'

She left me and presently came back dressed, not as an Orange Girl, but as a common person, such as one may see anywhere in St. Giles's. She had on a linsey woolsey frock: a dirty white apron all in holes: a kerchief round her neck: another over her head tied under her chin: a straw hat also tied under her chin: and woollen mittens

on her hands. One cheek was smudged as by a coal, and her left eye was blackened: no one would have recognised her. On her arm she carried a basket carefully covered up.

'Now,' she said, 'I'm a woman with a basket full of stolen goods for Mother Wilmot.'

I let her out by the garden-door which opened on to Hog's Lane. Presently she returned: from what she told me, this was what passed.

She found her mother nodding over knitting, and her sister Doll busy with the slate. The kitchen was well-nigh empty because most of the frequenters were abroad picking up their living. Like the sparrows they pick it up as they can from pockets and doorways and from shop-bulks.

'Doll,' she whispered. 'Pretend not to know me. Turn over the things in the basket.'

'What is it, Jenny?'

She looked round the room. There were only two or three sitting by the fire. 'No one who knows me,' she said. 'Tell me, Doll. Has Mr. Merridew been here—and when?'

'Why, he's only just gone. Him and the Bishop—and the Captain—and another one—a gentleman he looked like. All in black.'

'All in black? Was he tall and thin and stooping? So?'

'Yes. They've been talking over it all the morning.'

'What is it, Doll? You've got ears like gimlets. I sometimes think it must be pleasant to be able to hear so much that goes on.'

'I can hear a thing if I like. The Bishop don't like it, Jenny.' She dropped her voice. 'It's business for getting a man out of the way. They'll have to give evidence at the Old Bailey, and he's afraid.'

'How is the man to be put out of the way?'

'I don't know. There's money on it. But they're afraid.'

'Why are they afraid?'

'Because they're going to make a man swing. If he doesn't swing, they will.'

'I suppose it's an innocent man, Doll.'

'How should I know? It isn't one of themselves. If the case breaks down they'll have to swing. Mr. Merridew promised them so much, for I heard him. He means it, too—and they know it. I heard him. "If you do break down," he says, "after all, you will be no worse off than you are at present. For your time's up and you know it, both of you. So, if you break down, you will be arrested for conspiracy and detained on my information on a capital charge. After which—— he made so"'—with her finger on her neck.

'Well, what did they say, Doll?'

'The Bishop said it would be easier and quicker to knock him on the head at once. Mr. Merridew wouldn't hear of it. He said if they obeyed him they should have two years' more rope. If not, they knew what to expect. So they went away with him, looking mighty uneasy.'

'When is it to be, Doll?'

'Lord, sister, you are mighty curious. 'Tis no affair of yours. Best know nothing, I say. Only a body must hear things. And it makes the time pass knowing what to expect.'

'Can you find out when it is to be?'

'If I learn, I will tell you. It's all settled, I know that. We shall have the pair of them giving evidence in the Old Bailey.' Doll laughed at the thought. 'All St. Giles will go to the Court to hear—all them that dare.'

'So they went away with Mr. Merridew,' Jenny repeated thoughtfully.

'Yes, after a mug of purl, but the Bishop went away shaking.' Not on account of the crime, I suppose, but

with the thought of being cross-examined in the Old Bailey, and the terror that he might be recognised. But the only London Prison that knew him was the King's Bench.

Jenny took up her basket and went away. Just outside the door she met a young country fellow: he had come up from some village in consequence of trouble concerned with a girl: Jenny had had speech with him already, as you have heard, at the Black Jack.

'Jack,' she said, 'you don't remember me: I was at the Black Jack some time ago in the evening. They called me Madame. Now you remember.'

'Ay——' he said, looking at her curiously. 'But I shouldn't know you again. You are dressed different.'

'Jack, why don't you go home?'

'A man must live,' he replied.

'You'll be hanged. For sure and certain, one of these days, you'll be hanged. Now, Jack, I'll give you a chance. Let us sit here by the rails, and talk—then people won't suspect. You've seen Mr. Merridew to-day. I thought so. He told you that he might want you on some serious job. I thought so. Your looks are still innocent, Jack. Now tell me all about it—and I'll give you money to take you home again out of the way and safe.'

Jack had very little to tell. He had been in the kitchen that morning. Mr. Merridew called him—bade him not to go away: said that he should want him perhaps for a good job: so he waited. Then a gentleman came in: he was in black—a long, and lean figure. Jack would know him again; and they all four—but not Jack—talked very earnestly together. Then the gentleman went away and presently Mr. Merridew also went away, with the Bishop and the Captain.

'Very good, Jack. I will see you to-morrow morning

again—just in the same place. Don't forget. If anything else occurs you will tell me. Poor Jack! I should be sorry to see so proper a fellow hanged,' so she nodded and laughed and pressed his hand and left him.

She came home: she joined me again. There was something hatching; that was certain.

'Perhaps,' she said, 'the plot is not directed against you. Merridew is always finding out where a house can be broken or a bale of stuff stolen.'

'Then what did Probus want there?'

'The long, lean man in black was not Probus, perhaps.'

She considered again.

'After all, Will, I think the best thing is for you to disappear. They are desperate villains. Get out of their way. Your friend Ramage gave you the best advice possible. If all he says is true, Matthew cannot hold out much longer. Once he is bankrupt, your death will no longer help Probus. Where could you go?'

I told her that I thought of Dublin, where I might get into the orchestra of the theatre. So after a little discussion, it was settled. Jenny, always generous, undertook to provide for Alice in my absence, and gave me a sum of money for present necessities.

I stayed there all day. In the evening I played at a concert in the Assembly Room. After the concert I took supper with Jenny.

During supper Jenny entertained me with a fuller description of the wretches from whose hands she was trying to rescue me. There was no turn or trick of villainy that Jenny did not know. She made no excuses for knowing so much—it was part of her education to hear continually talk of these things. They make up disguises in which it is impossible to recognise them: they arrange that respectable people shall swear to their having been

miles away at the time of any crime: they practise on the ignorance of some: on the cunning of others. They prey upon mankind. And all the time, behind every villain stands a greater villain. Behind the humble footpad stands the Captain: behind the Captain stands the thief-taker: behind the thief-taker stands the money-lender, himself unseen. It would surely be to the advantage of the Law could it tackle the greater villains first. A cart-load of gentlemen like Mr. Probus on its way to Tyburn would perhaps be more useful than many cartloads of poor pickpockets and hedge-lifters. Sometimes, however, as this history will relate, Justice with tardy step overtakes a Probus, and that with punishment so dreadful that he is left incapable of any further wickedness.

'Now,' she said, 'when Probus wants money, he squeezes Merridew. Then he lays information against some poor wretch who expected a longer rope. In order to get at these wretches he has to encourage them to break the law. So you see, if he has to make a payment to Probus, he must manufacture criminals. As I said, there cannot be many things worse than the making of criminals for the satisfaction of the money-lender.'

I hardly understood, at the time, the full villainy of this system. In fact I was wholly absorbed in my own particular case. What was going to be done?

About midnight I bade this kindest of women farewell.

'Remember, Will,' she said, 'trust nothing to chance. Take boat down the river before daybreak. There is sure to be a Holyhead coach somewhere in the morning. In a month or two you can come back again in safety.'

Yes—I was to come back in safety in that time, but not as Jenny meant. I shouldered my trusty club and marched off.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY.

My way home lay through Dean Street as far as St. Ann's Church: then I passed across Leicester Fields: and through Green Street at the south-east angle of the Fields into St. Martin's Lane. All this part of the way is greatly infested at night by lurking footpads from the choice purlieus of Seven Dials and Soho. Of footpads, however, I had very little fear: they are at best a cowardly crew, even two or three together, and a man with a stout cudgel and some skill at a quarter-staff or single-stick need not be afraid of them: generally, two or three passengers will join together in order to get across the Fields, which are especially the dangerous part: on many nights it was so late when I left the Square that even footpads, highwaymen, pickpockets and all were fairly home and in bed before I walked through the streets.

This evening by bad luck, I was alone. I found no other passengers going my way. But I had no fear. I poised my cudgel and set out, expecting perhaps an encounter with a footpad, but nothing worse. And it was not yet late, as hours go, in London: there were still people in the streets.

What had happened was this. As soon as Probus learned the truth about the gaming-table—a fatal thing it was to disclose my knowledge—he understood two things: first, that his money was irrevocably gone: and second, that if I revealed the truth to the Alderman in his suburban retreat, he must needs investigate the position of things, in which case Bankruptcy would be precipitated.

After that, whether I died or signed the agreement, or refused to sign it, would matter nothing to him. Whereas, on the other hand, if my signature could be obtained before the bankruptcy, then money could be raised upon the succession: and if I were to die, then the whole of the money would be paid on the day of my death to Matthew. Whatever was done must therefore be done as soon as possible.

Therefore, he resolved that the plot should be carried into execution on the very Monday evening. He caused the cottage to be watched by one of the girls who frequented the Black Jack: she followed me all the way from Lambeth to Soho Square: and she carried intelligence where to find me to the tavern, where Probus himself, with Merridew, the Bishop, and the Captain, was now waiting.

They understood that I was playing at a concert: they therefore sallied out about the time when the concert would be finishing and waited for me in the Square: at eleven o'clock I sallied forth: I walked down Dean Street: they ran down Greek Street to meet me at the other end, where there are fewer people: but (I heard this afterwards) changed their minds and got over the Fields into Green Street behind the Mews, where they resolved to wait for me. The Bishop posted himself on one side: the Captain on the other: Mr. Probus and Mr. Merridew waited a little further down the street. It was a dangerous plot that they were going to attempt: I am not surprised that neither the Bishop nor the Captain had much stomach for the play. At this place, which has as bad a reputation as any part of London, there are seldom any passengers after night-fall; after midnight, none. It is dark: the houses are inhabited by criminal and disorderly people—but all this is well known to everybody.

I walked briskly along, anticipating no danger of this kind. Suddenly, I heard footsteps in front of me and behind me: there was a movement in the quiet street; by such light as the stars gave, I saw before me the rascally face of the Bishop: I lifted my cudgel: I half turned:—crash!—I remember nothing more.

When I came to my senses, or to some part of my senses, I found myself lying on a sanded floor: my head was filled with a dull and heavy pain: my eyes were dazed: to open them brought on an agony of pain. For awhile the voices I heard were like the buzzing of bees.

I grew better: I was able to distinguish a little: but I could not yet open my eyes.

The first voice that I recognised was that of Mr. Probus—the rasping, harsh, terrifying voice—who could mistake it?

'A bad case, gentlemen,' he was saying, 'a very bad case: it was fortunate that I was passing on my way, if only to identify the prisoner. Dear me! I knew his honoured father, gentlemen; I was his father's unworthy attorney. His father was none other than Sir Peter Halliday. The young man was turned out of the house for misconduct. A bad case—Who would have thought that Sir Peter's son would die at Tyburn?'

Then there was another voice: rich and rolling, like a low stop of the organ—I knew that too. It was the voice of the Bishop.

'My name, Mr. Constable, is Carstairs; Samuel Carstairs; the Rev. Samuel Carstairs, Doctor of Divinity, Sanctæ Theologiæ Professor, sometime of Trinity College, Dublin. I am an Irish clergyman, at present without cure of souls. I was walking home after certain godly exercises'—in the Black Jack—I suppose—'when this fellow ran out in front of me, crying "Your money or

I LIFTED MY CUDGEL.

your life." I am not a fighting man, Sir, but a servant of the Lord. I gave him my purse, entreating him to spare my life. As he took it, some other gentleman, unknown to me, ran to my assistance, and knocked the villain down. Perhaps, Mr. Constable, you would direct his pockets to be searched. The purse contained seventeen guineas.'

I felt hands in my pocket. Something was taken out.

'Ha!' cried the Doctor. 'Let the money be counted.'

I heard the click of coin and another voice cried 'Seventeen guineas.'

'Well,' said Mr. Probus, 'there cannot be much doubt after that.'

'I rejoice,' said the Doctor, 'not so much that the money is found—though I assure you, worthy Sir, I could ill afford the loss—as because it clearly proves the truth of my evidence—if, that is to say, there could be any question as to its truth, or anyone with the hardihood to doubt it.'

At this point, I was able to open my eyes. The place I knew for a Round house. The Constable in charge sat at a table, a book before him, entering the case: Mr. Probus stood beside him, shaking his virtuous head with sorrow. The Doctor was holding up his hands to express a good clergyman's horror of the crime: Mr. Merridew was standing on the other side of the Constable, and beside him the Captain, who now stepped forward briskly.

'My name,' he said, 'is Ferdinando Fenwick. I am a countryman from Cumberland. I was walking with this gentleman'—he indicated Mr. Merridew. 'We were walking together for purposes of mutual protection, for I have been warned against this part of London, when I saw the action described by this pious clergyman. The man ran forward raising his cudgel. I have brought it with

me—You can see, Sir, that it is a murderous weapon. I saw the gentleman here, whose name I did not catch——'

'Carstairs—By your leave, Sir—Samuel Carstairs—The Rev. Samuel Carstairs—Doctor of Divinity—Sanctæ Theologiæ Professor.'

'Thank you, Sir. I saw him hand over his purse. The villain raised his cudgel again. I verily believe he intended to murder as well as to rob his victim. I therefore ran to the rescue and with a blow of my stick felled the ruffian.'

The Constable looked doubtfully at Mr. Merridew, whom he knew by sight, as everybody connected with the criminal part of the law certainly did: he knew him as Sheriff's officer, nominally: thief-taker by secret profession: thief-maker, as matter of notoriety at the Courts. From him he looked at Mr. Probus, but more doubtfully, because he knew nothing about him except that he was an attorney, which means to such people as the Constable, devil incarnate. He also looked doubtfully at the Captain, whose face, perhaps, he knew. Considering that the Captain had been living for eight years at least in and about St. Giles's, and robbing about all the roads that run out of London, perhaps the Constable did know him by sight.

'Well,' he said, 'I suppose Sir John will look into it to-morrow. As for this gentleman who says he is—— I remember——'

Here Mr. Probus slipped something into his hand.

'It is not for me,' the worthy Constable added, 'to remember anything. Besides, I may be wrong. Well, gentlemen, you will all attend to-morrow morning at Bow Street and give your evidence before Sir John Fielding.'

So they went away and I lay on the floor still wondering stupidly what would happen next.

Just then two watchmen came in. One was leading, or dragging, or carrying a young gentleman richly dressed, but so drunk that he could neither stand nor speak: the other brought with him a poor creature—a woman—young—only a girl still—dressed in rags and tatters; shivering: unwashed; uncombed; weak and emaciated: a deplorable object.

The Constable turned to the first case.

'Give the gentleman a chair,' he said. 'Put him before the fire. Reach me his watch and his purse. Search his pockets, watchman.'

'Please your honour,' said the watchman, 'I have searched his pockets. We came too late, Sir. Nothing in them.'

'The town is full of villains—full of villains,' said the officer, with honest indignation. 'Well, put him in the chair. A gentleman can send for guineas if he hasn't got any guineas. Did he assault you, watchman? I thought so—Well—Let him sleep it off. Who's this woman?'

The watchman deposed to finding her walking about the deserted streets because she had nowhere to go.

'Has she got any money? Then just put her in the strong room—and carry this poor devil in after her. If that story holds—well—lay him on the bench—and take care of his head.'

They pushed the girl into the strong-room: carried me after her: laid me down on a wide stone bench without any kind of pillow or covering. Then they went out, locking the door behind them.

I suppose that I should have suffered more than I did had it not been for the stupefying effect of the blow upon my head. I have only a dim recollection of the night. The place was filled with poor wretches, men and women, who could not afford to bribe the Constable. In this land

of freedom to be a poor rogue is hanging matter: to be a rogue with money in pocket and purse is quite another thing: that rogue goes free. The rogue runs the gauntlet: first, he may get off by bribing the watchman: if he fails to do that, he may bribe the constable: or, if the worst happens, he may then bribe the magistrate. I understand, however, that this has been changed, and that there are now no Justices who take bribes. Now, if the watchman brings few cases to the constable, and those all poor rogues, he may lose his place: and if the constable pockets all the bribes and brings the magistrate none, he may lose his place. So that it is mutually agreed between the three that each is to have his share. All mankind are for ever seeking and praying for Justice, and behold, this is all we have got in the boasted eighteenth century. I suppose, however, that in such a case as mine, a charge of highway robbery, in which the prisoner was taken red-handed, no constable would dare to take a bribe.

From time to time in the night we were disturbed by the grating of the key in the lock as the door was opened for the admission of another poor wretch. Then these interruptions ceased, and we were left in quiet.

When the day broke through the bars of the only window, I could look round upon the people, my companions in misfortune. There were three or four women in tawdry finery—very poor and miserable creatures who would be happier in the worst prison than in the way they lived: two or three pickpockets and footpads: one or two prentices, who would be sent to Bridewell and flogged for being found drunk. There was very little talk. Mostly, the wretches sat in gloomy silence. They had not even the curiosity to ask each other as to the offences with which they were charged.

As the light increased the women began to whisper.

They exhorted each other to courage. Before them all, in imagination, stood the dreadful whipping-post of Bridewell. Some of them have had an experience of that punishment.

'It takes but two or three minutes,' they said. 'Then it soon passes off. Mind you screech as if they were murdering you. That frightens the Alderman, and brings down the knocker. Don't begin to fret about it.' They were talking about their whippings in Bridewell. 'Perhaps Sir John will let you go. Sometimes he does.' My head pained, and I closed my eyes again.

At about eight o'clock the doors were flung wide open. Everyone started, shuddered, and stood up. 'Now, then,' cried a harsh voice, 'out with you! Out, I say.'

I was still giddy with last night's blow: my hair was stiff with blood: my head ached, but I was able to walk out with the others. The constables arranged us in a kind of procession, and put the handcuffs on every one. Then we were marched through the streets two by two, guarded by constables, to Bow Street Office, the Magistrate of which was then Sir John Fielding.

There was some slight comfort in the thought that he was blind: he could not be prejudiced against me by my appearance, for my face was smeared with blood: my hair was stiff with blood. There was blood on my coat, and where there was not blood there was the mud of the street in which I had lain senseless.

The business of the Court was proceeding. The Magistrate sat at a table: his eyes were bandaged. The eyes of Justice should be always bandaged. Over his head on the wall hung the Lion and the Unicorn: the prisoners were placed in a railed space: the witnesses in another: those in my case, I observed, were in readiness and waiting: three or four Bow Street runners were standing in

the Court: there was a dock for the prisoner facing the magistrate.

The cases took little time. There is a dreadful sameness about the charges. The women were despatched summarily and sent off to Bridewell: they received their sentence with cries and lamentations, which stopped quickly enough when they found that they could not move the magistrate: the pickpockets were ordered to be whipped: the other rogues were committed to prison. They were destined, for the most part, to transportation beyond the seas. It is useful for the country to get rid of its rogues: it seems also humane to send them to a country where they may lead an honest life. Alas! the humanity of the law is marred by the execution of the sentence, for though the voyage does not last more than six or eight weeks, the gaol fever taken on board the ship; the sea sickness; the stench; the dirt; the foul air: of the ship, commonly kill at least a third of the poor creatures thus sent out. As for those who are left, many of them run away from their masters: make their way to a port, get on board a ship, and are carried back to London, where they are fain to go back to their old companions and resume their old habits, and get known to Mr. Merridew and his friends, and so at last find themselves in the condemned cells.

My case came on, at last. I was placed in the dock facing the magistrate. The clerk read to him the notes of the case provided by the chief constable.

'Your name, prisoner?' he asked.

'I am William Halliday,' I said, 'only son of the late Sir Peter Halliday, formerly Lord Mayor of London. I am a musician now in the employment of Madame Vallance, Proprietor of the Assembly Rooms in Soho Square.

The Magistrate whispered to his clerk.

Then the evidence was given. One after the other they manfully stood up: kissed the book: and committed perjury. Sir John Fielding asked the Doctor several questions. He was evidently doubtful: his clerk whispered again: he pressed the Doctor as to his alleged profession and position. However, the man stuck to his tale. The fact that the purse was found in my pocket was very strong. Then the Captain told his story.

Mr. Merridew did not attempt any disguise: he was too well known in Court: he stated that he was a Sheriff's officer—named Merridew—everybody in the court gazed upon him with the greatest curiosity, the women whispering and looking from him to me. 'Who is he?' they asked each other. 'What has he done? Do you know him—do you?' The appearance of a stranger in the dock charged on the evidence of the worthy sheriff's officer caused general surprise. However, Mr. Merridew took no notice of the whispering. He was apparently callous: he took it perhaps as proof of popularity and admiration: he gave his evidence in the manner of one accustomed to bear witness, as indeed he was, having perhaps given evidence oftener than any other living man. He stated that he had joined a stranger to walk from the Tottenham Court Road to Charing Cross, each carrying a cudgel for self-defence: that he observed the action described by the worthy and learned Doctor of Divinity from Ireland: that his companion, this gallant young gentleman, rushed out to the rescue of the clergyman, and so forth. So he retired with a front of iron.

Mr. Probus added to the evidence which you have already heard the statement that he came accidentally upon the party and after the business was over: that he happened to have been attorney to the late Sir Peter Halliday: that he recognised the robber as the unnatural

son of that good man, turned out of his father's home for his many crimes and vices: and that in the interest of justice and respect for the laws of his country he went out of his way, and was at great personal loss and inconvenience in order to give this evidence.

The Magistrate put no questions to him. He turned to me and asked if I had anything to say or any evidence to offer.

I had none, except—that I was no highwayman, but a respectable musician, and that this was a conspiracy.

'You will have the opportunity,' said Sir John, 'of proving the fact. Meantime, in the face of this evidence, conspiracy or not, I have no choice but to commit you to Newgate, there to remain until your trial.'

They set me aside and the next case was called.

So you understand, there are other ways of compassing a man's death besides simple murder. It is sufficient to enter into a conspiracy and to charge him with an offence which, by the laws of the country, is punishable by death.

CHAPTER IX.

NEWGATE.

A MAN must be made of brass or wrought-iron who can enter the gloomy portals of Newgate as a prisoner without a trembling of the limbs and a sinking of the heart. Not even consciousness of innocence is sufficient to sustain a prisoner, for alas! even the innocent are sometimes found guilty. Once within the first doors I was fain to lay hold upon the nearest turnkey or I should have fallen into a swoon; a thing which, they tell me, happens with many, for the first entrance into prison is worse to the imagina-

tion even than the standing up in the dock to take one's trial in open court. There is, in the external aspect of the prison: in the gloom which hangs over the prison: in the mixture of despair and misery and drunkenness and madness and remorse which fills the prison, an air which strikes terror to the very soul. They took me into a large vaulted ante-room, lit by windows high up, with the turnkeys' private room opening out of it, and doors leading into the interior parts of the Prison. The room was filled with people waiting their turn to visit the prisoners; they carried baskets and packages and bottles; their provisions, in a word, for the Prison allows the prisoners no more than one small loaf of bread every day. Some of the visitors were quiet, sober people: some were women on whose cheeks lay tears: some were noisy, reckless young men, who laughed over the coming fate of their friends; spoke of Tyburn Fair; of kicking off the shoes at the gallows; of dying game; of Newgate music—meaning the clatter of the irons; of whining and snivelling; and so forth. They took in wine, or perhaps rum under the name of wine. There were also girls whose appearance and manner certainly did not seem as if sorrow and sympathy with the unfortunate had alone brought them to this place. Some of the girls also carried bottles of wine with them in baskets.

I was then brought before the Governor, who, I thought, would perhaps hear me if I declared the truth. But I was wrong. He barely looked at me; he entered my name and occupation, and the nature of the crime with which I was charged. Then he coldly ordered me to be taken in and ironed.

The turnkey led me into a room hung with irons. 'What side?' he asked.

I told him I knew nothing about any sides.

'Why,' he said, 'I thought all the world knew so much. There's the State side. If you go there you will pay for admission three guineas; for garnish and a pair of light irons, one guinea; for rent of a bed half a guinea a week; and for another guinea you can have coals and candles, plates and a knife. Will that suit you?' He looked disdainfully at the dirt and blood with which I was covered, as if he thought the State side was not for the likes of me.

'Alas!' I replied, 'I cannot go to the State side.'

'I thought not, by the look of you. Well, there's the master's side next; the fee for admission is only thirteen and sixpence: irons, half a guinea: the rent of a bed or part of a bed half a crown, and as for your food, what you like to order and pay for. No credit at this tavern, which is the sign of the Clinking Iron. Will that suit you?'

'No, I can pay nothing.'

'Then why waste time asking questions? There's the common side; you've got to go into that, and very grateful you ought to be that there is a common side at all for such a filthy Beast as you.'

My choice must needs be the last because I had no money at all: not a single solitary shilling—my obliging friends when they put their purse into my pocket as a proof of the alleged robbery, abstracted my own—which no doubt the worthy Professor of Sacred Theology had in his pocket while he was explaining the nature of the attack to the Constable.

The turnkey while he grumbled about waste of time—a prisoner ought to say at once if he had no money: officers of the Prison were not paid to tell stories to every ragged, filthy footpad; the Common Side was as good as any other on the way to Tyburn: what could a ragamuffin covered with blood and filth expect?—picked out a pair of irons: they were the rustiest and the heaviest that he

could find: as he hammered them on he said that for half a crown he would drive the rivet into my heel only that he would rob his friend Jack Ketch of the pleasure of turning off a poor whining devil who came into Newgate without a copper. 'Damme!' he cried, as he finished his work, 'if I believe you ever tried to rob anyone!'

'I did not,' I replied. At which he laughed, recovering his good temper, and opening a door, shoved me through and shut it behind me.

The Common side of Newgate is a place which, though I was in it no more than two hours or so, remains fixed in my memory and will stay there as long as life remains. The yard was filled to overflowing with a company of the vilest, the filthiest, and the most shameless that it is possible to imagine. They were pickpockets, footpads, shoplifters, robbers of every kind; they were in rags; they were unwashed and unshaven; some of them were drunk; some of them were emaciated by insufficient food —a penny loaf a day was doled out to those who had no money and no friends: that was actually all that the poor wretches had to keep body and soul together: the place was crowded not only with the prisoners, but with their friends and relations of both sexes; the noise, the cursings, the ribald laugh; the drunken song; the fighting and quarrelling can never be imagined. And in the narrow space of the yard, which is like the bottom of a deep well, there is no air moving, so that the stench is enough, at first, to make a horse sick.

I can liken it to nothing but a sty too narrow for the swine that crowded it; so full of unclean beasts was it, so full of noise and pushing and quarrelling: so full of passions, jealousies, and suspicions ungoverned, was it. Or I would liken it to a chamber in hell when the sharp agony of physical suffering is for a while changed for the

equal pains of such companionship and such discourse as those of the Common Side. I stood near the door as the turnkey had pushed me in, staring stupidly about. Some sat on the stone bench with tobacco-pipes and pots of beer: some played cards on the bench: some walked about: there were women visitors, but not one whose face showed shame or sorrow. To such people as these Newgate is like an occasional attack of sickness; a whipping is but one symptom of the disease: imprisonment is the natural cure of the disease; hanging is only the natural common and inevitable end when the disease is incurable, just as death in his bed happens to a man with fever.

While I looked about me, a man stepped out of the crowd. 'Garnish!' he cried, holding out his hand. Then they all crowded round, crying 'Garnish! garnish!' I held up my hands: I assured them that I was penniless. The man who had first spoken waved back the others with his hand. 'Friend,' he said, 'if you have no money, off with your coat.'

Then, I know not what happened, because I think I must have fallen into a kind of fit. When I recovered I was lying along the stone bench: my coat was gone: my waistcoat was gone; my shirt was in rags; my shoes—on which were silver buckles, were gone; and my stockings, which were of black silk. My head was in a woman's lap.

'Well done,' she said, 'I thought you'd come round. 'Twas the touching of the wound on your head. Brutes and beasts you are, all of you! all of you! One comfort is you'll all be hanged, and that very soon. It'll be a happy world without you.'

'Come, Nan,' one of the men said, 'you know it's the rule. If a gentleman won't pay his garnish he must give up his coat.'

'Give up his coat! You've stripped him to the skin.

And him with an open wound on his head bleeding again like a pig!'

The people melted away: they offered no further apology; but the coat and the rest of the things were not returned.

My good Samaritan, to judge by her dress and appearance, was one of the commonest of common women—the wife or the mistress of a Gaol-bird; the companion of thieves; the accomplice of villains. Yet there was left on her still, whatever the habit of her life, this touch of human kindness that made her come to the assistance of a helpless stranger. No Christian could have done more. 'Forasmuch,' said Christ, 'as you did it unto one of these you did it unto Me.' When I read these words I think of this poor woman, and I pray for her.

'Lie still a minute,' she said, 'I will stanch the bleeding with a little gin,' she pulled out a flat bottle. 'It is good gin. I will pour a little on the wound. That can't hurt —so.' But it did hurt. 'Now, my pretty gentleman, for you are a gentleman, though maybe only a gentleman rider and woundily in want of a wash. Take a sip for yourself, don't be afraid. Take a long sip. I brought it here for my man, but he's dead. He died in the night after a fight in the yard here. He got a knife between his ribs,' she spoke of this occurrence as if such a conclusion to a fight was quite in the common way. 'Look here, sir, you've no business in this place. Haven't you got any friends to pay for the Master's side? Now you're easier, and the bleeding has stopped. Can you stand, do you think?'

I made shift to get to my feet, shivering in the cold damp November air. She had a bundle lying on the bench. 'Tis my man's clothes,' she said. 'Take his coat and shoes. You must. Else with nothing but the boards to sleep upon you'll be starved to death. Now I must go and

tell his friends that my man is dead. Well—he won't be hanged. I never did like to think that I should be the widow of a Tyburn bird.'

She put on me the warm thick coat that had been her husband's; she put on his shoes. I was still stupid and dull of understanding. But I tried to thank her.

Some weeks afterwards, when I was at length released, I ventured back into the prison in hopes of finding the name and the residence of the woman—Samaritan, if ever there was one. The turnkeys could tell me nothing. The gaol was full of women, they said. My friend was named Nan. They were all Nans. She was the wife of a prisoner who died in the place. They were always dying on the Common side. That was nothing. They all know each other by name; but it was six weeks ago; prisoners change every day; they are brought in; they are sent out to be hanged, pilloried, whipped or transported. In a word they knew nothing and would not take the trouble to inquire. What did it matter to these men made callous by intimacy with suffering, that a woman of the lower kind had done a kind and charitable action? Nevertheless, we have Christ's own assurance—His words—His promise. The woman's action will be remembered on the day when her sins shall be passed before a merciful Judge. Her sins! Alas! she was what she was brought up to be; her sins lie upon the head of those who suffer her, and those like to her, to grow up without religion, or virtue, or example, or admonition.

By this time I was growing faint with hunger as well as with loss of blood and fatigue. I had taken nothing for fourteen hours; namely, since supper the evening before the attack. The first effect of hunger is to stop the power of thought. There fell upon me a feeling of carelessness as if nothing mattered: the night in the watch-house: the

'OH! MY POOR WILL!'

appearance before the magistrate: my reception on the Common Side: all passed across my brain as if they belonged to someone else. I rose with difficulty, but staggered and fell back upon the bench. My head was light: I seemed strangely happy. This lightness of head was quickly followed by a drowsiness which became stupor. How long I lay there I know not. I remember nothing until a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder. 'Come,' it was the voice of a turnkey. 'This is not the kind of place for an afternoon nap in November. Come this way. A lady wants to see you.'

He led me to the door of the common side: and threw it open: in the waiting-room was none other than Jenny herself. How had she learned what had happened?

'Oh! my poor Will!' she cried, the tears running down her cheeks. 'This is even worse than I expected. But first you must be made comfortable. Here, you fellow,' she called the turnkey. 'Take him away. I will pay for everything. Let him be washed and get his wound dressed; give him a clean shirt and get him at once new clothes.'

'If your ladyship pleases——'

'Change these rusty irons for the lightest you have. Put him into the best cell that you have on the State side. Get a dinner for him: anything that is quickest—cold beef—ham—bread—a bottle of Madeira. Go—quick.' She stamped her foot with authority; she put into the man's hand enough money to pay for half a dozen prisoners on the State side. 'Now, fly—don't crawl—fly!—one would think you were all asleep. A pretty place this is to sleep in!'

The man knocked off my heavy irons and substituted a pair of lighter ones, highly polished and even ornamental. He took me away and washed me; it was in the turnkeys' room on the right hand of the entrance; he also with some

'We only know through Ramage,' I replied. 'Is that enough to prove the conspiracy? I know what those two men are who are the leading witnesses—how can I prove it? I know that they were suborned by Probus and that they are in the power of Merridew. How can I prove it? I know that Probus has talked to my cousin about my possible death, but what does that prove? I know that he will benefit by my death to the amount of many thousands, but how can I prove it? My mouth will be closed. Where are my witnesses?'

'You can't prove anything, Will. And therefore you had better not try.'

'Jenny.' The tears came to my unmanly eyes. 'Leave me. Go, break the news to Alice, and prepare her mind to see me die.'

'I will break the news to Alice, but I will not prepare her mind to see you die. For, my dear cousin, you shall not die.' She spoke with assurance. She was standing up and she brought her hand down upon the table with a slap which, with her flashing eyes and coloured cheek, inspired confidence for the moment. 'You shall not die by the conspiracy of these villains.'

'How to prevent them?'

'It would be easy if their friends would bear evidence against them. But they will not. They will sit in the Court and admire the tragic perjuries of the witnesses. There is one rule among my people which is never broken; no one must peach on his brother. Shall dog bite dog? If that rule is broken it is never forgiven—never—so long as the offender lives.'

'Then, what can we do?'

'The short way would be to buy them. But in this respect they cannot be bought. They will rob or murder or perjure themselves with cheerfulness, but they will not

peach on their brother. Money will not tempt them. Jealousy might, but there are no women in this case. Revenge might, but there is here no private quarrel. Besides, they are all in the hands of the man Merridew. To thwart him would bring certain destruction on their heads. And if there was any other reason, they are naturally anxious to avoid a Court of Justice. They would rather see their own children hanged than go into a court to give evidence, true or false.'

'Then I must suffer, Jenny.'

'Nay, Will, I said not so much—I was only putting the case before myself. I see many difficulties, but there is always a way out—always an end.'

'Always an end,' I repeated. 'Oh! Jenny. What an end!'

A Newgate fit was on me; that is, a fit of despondency which is almost despair. All the inmates of Newgate know what it means; the rattling of the irons; the recollection of the trial to come; a word that jars; and the Newgate shuddering seizes a man and shakes him up and down till it is spent. Jenny made me drink a glass of wine. The fit passed away.

'I feel,' I said at last, 'as if the rope was already round my neck. My poor Alice! My poor child! Thou wilt be the son of a highwayman and a Tyburn bird. To the third and fourth generation . . .'

'I know nothing about generations,' Jenny interrupted. 'All I know is that you are going to be saved. Why, man, consider. Probus knows nothing about me; these conspirators know nothing about Madame Vallance; none of them have the least suspicion; and must not have: that you know Jenny of the Black Jack. Now I shall try to get a case as to the conspiracy clear without attacking the loyalty of the gang to each other. I have thought of such

a plan. And I know an attorney. You have seen him. He is tolerably honest, if an attorney can be honest. He shall advise us—I will send him here. Be of good cheer, Will. I go to fetch Alice. Put on a smiling countenance to greet her. Come, you are a man. Lift the drooping spirit of the woman who loves you. Keep up her heart if not your own.'

She came back at about five: the day was already over; the yards and courts of the Prison were already dark. My cell was lit with a pair of candles when Jenny brought Alice and her brother Tom to see me.

Alice, poor child! fell into my arms and so lay for a long time, unable to speak for the sobs that tore her almost in pieces, yet unwilling to let me see her weakness.

Tom—the good fellow—assumed the same air of cheerfulness which he had learned to show in the King's Bench. He sniffed the air approvingly. He looked round with pretended satisfaction. 'Ha!' he said, 'this place hath been misrepresented. The room is convenient, if small; the furniture solid: the air is not so close as one might expect. For a brief residence—a temporary residence—a man might . . . might—I say——' He cleared his throat; the tears came into his eyes: he sank into a chair. 'Oh! Will . . . Will,' he cried, breaking down, and unable to pretend any longer.

Then no one spoke. Indeed all our hearts were full.

'It is not so much on your account, Will,' said Jenny—I observed that she wore a domino, and indeed, she never came to the prison after the first visit without a domino, a precaution by no means unusual, because ladies might not like to be seen in Newgate, and in any case it might arouse suspicions if Jenny were recognised. 'I say it is not on your account, so much as for the sake of this dear creature.

Madam—Alice—I implore you—take courage; we have the proofs of the conspiracy in our hands. It is a black and hellish plot. The only difficulty is as to the best means of using our knowledge, and here, I confess, for the moment, I am not certain——'

Alice recovered herself and stood up, holding my hand. 'I cannot believe,' she said, 'that such wickedness as this will be permitted to succeed. It would bring shame and sorrow on children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.'

'You all talk about generations,' said Jenny. 'For my part I think of you that are alive, not those who are to come. Well, so far it has not succeeded. For the conspirators are known to me and I am Will's cousin—and this they know not.'

They stayed talking till nine o'clock, when visitors had to leave the Prison. Jenny cheered all our hearts. She would hear of no difficulties: all was clear: all was easy: she had the conspirators in her power. To-morrow she would return with her honest and clever attorney. So Alice went away with a lighter heart, and I was left for the night alone in my cell with a gleam of hope. In the morning that gleam left me, and the day broke upon the place of gloom and brought with it only misery and despair.

In the forenoon Jenny returned with her attorney. He was the man who had already acted for me. His name was Dewberry; he was possessed of a manner easy and assured, which inspired confidence: in face and figure he was attractive, and he betrayed no eagerness to possess himself of his client's money. I observed also, at the outset, that, like all the rest, he was the servant (who would, if he could, become the lover) of Jenny.

'Now, Mr. Halliday,' he said, 'I have heard some part

of your story from Madame Vallance. I want, next, to hear your own version.' So I told it, while he listened gravely, making notes.

'It is certainly,' he said, 'a very strong point that your death would give Probus the chance of recovering his money. Your cousin could then pay him off, if he wished, in full. Whether he would do so is another question. If bankruptcy arrives and finds you still living, all the creditors would be considered together. Madam,' he turned to Jenny, 'you who have so fine a head for management, let us hear your opinion.'

'I think of nothing else,' she said. 'Yet I cannot satisfy myself. I have thought that my sister Doll might warn the Captain that both he and the Bishop would be exposed in Court. But what would happen? They would instantly go off with the news to Merridew. And then? An information against Doll and my mother for receiving stolen goods. And what would happen then? You know very well, Mr. Dewberry. They would have to buy their release by forbidding the exposure! Why, they are the most notorious receivers living. Or, suppose Doll plainly told them that her sister Jenny knew the whole case—they don't know at present—at least, I think not—where I am—but they can easily find out—that I knew the whole case and meant to expose them. What would happen next? Murder, my masters. I should be found on my bed with my throat cut, and a letter to show that it was done by one of my maids.'

'Jenny, for Heaven's sake, do not run these risks.'

'Not if I can help it, Will. Do you know what I think of—besides? It is a doubt whether Matthew would be more rejoiced to see the conspiracy succeed and you put out of the way, or to witness the conviction of Probus for conspiracy.'

'Softly—softly, Madam,' said the attorney; 'we are a long way yet from the trial, even, of Mr. Probus.'

'Jenny,' I said, 'your words bring me confidence.'

'If you feel all the confidence that there is in Newgate it will not be enough, Will, for the confidence that you ought to have. But we must work in silence. If our friends only knew what we are talking here, why then—the Lord help the landlady of the Black Jack and her two daughters, Jenny and Doll!'

'You must be aware, Sir,' said Mr. Dewberry, 'that it is absolutely necessary for us to preserve silence upon everything connected with your defence. You must not communicate any details upon the subject to your most intimate friends and relations.'

'He means Alice,' said Jenny.

'We must have secrecy.'

'You may trust a man whose life is at stake.'

'Yes. Now the principal witnesses are the pretended Divine and the pretended country gentleman. They rest in the assurance that none of their friends will betray them. We must see what can be done. If we prove that your Irish Divine is a common rogue we make his evidence suspected, but we do not prove the conspiracy. The fellow might brave it out, and still swear to the attempted robbery. Then as to the other worthy, we may prove that he is a notorious rogue. Still he may swear stoutly to his evidence. We must prove, in addition, that these two rogues are known to each other——'

'That can be proved by any who were in the King's Bench Prison with them——'

'And we must connect them with Probus and Merridew.'

'I can prove that as well,' said Jenny. 'That is, if——'

She paused.

'If your witnesses will give evidence. Madam, I would not pour cold water on your confidence—but—will your witnesses go into the box?'

Jenny smiled. 'I believe,' she said, 'that I can fill the Court with witnesses.'

'I want more than belief—I want certainty.'

'There is another way,' said Jenny. 'If we could let Mr. Probus understand that the sudden and unexpected appearance of a new set of creditors would force on Bankruptcy immediately——'

Mr. Dewberry interposed hastily. 'Madam, I implore you. There is no necessity at all. Sir, this lady would actually sacrifice her own fortune and her future prospects in your cause.'

'For his safety and for his life—everything.'

'I assure you, dear Madam, there is no need. Your affairs want only patience, and they will adjust themselves. To throw them also upon your husband's other liabilities would not help this gentleman. For this reason. There are a thousand tricks and subtleties which a man of Mr. Probus's knowledge may employ for the postponement of bankruptcy until after the trial of our friend here. You know not the resources of the law in a trained hand. I mean that, supposing Mr. Probus to reckon on the success of this conspiracy—in which I grieve to find a brother in the profession involved; he may cause these delays to extend until his end is accomplished or defeated. A man of the Law, Madam, has great powers.'

I groaned.

'Another point is that, unless I am much mistaken, this conspiracy is intended to intimidate and not to be carried out. Mr. Probus will offer you, I take it, your liberty on condition of your yielding in the matter of that money.'

'Never!' I declared. 'I will die first!'

'Then it remains to be seen if he will carry the thing through.'

So they went on arguing on this side and on that side: which line of action was best: which was dangerous: in the end, as you shall see, Jenny took the management of the case into her own hands with results which astonished Mr. Dewberry as well as the Court, myself, and the four heroes of the conspiracy.

Five weeks, I learned, would elapse before my case would be tried in Court. It was a long and a tedious time to contemplate in advance. Meantime, I was kept in ignorance, for the most part, of what was being done. Afterwards I learned that Jenny carried on the work in secrecy, so that not only the conspirators might not have the least suspicion but that even Mr. Dewberry did not know what was doing until she placed the case complete in his hands a few days before the trial. Jenny contrived all: Jenny paid for all: what the case cost her in money I never learned. She spared nothing, neither labour, nor travel, nor money. Meantime I lived on now in hope, now in despondency: to go outside among my fellow prisoners was to increase the wretchedness of prison. Every morning Alice brought provisions for the day. Tom brought me my violin and music, so that I was not without some consolations.

As I remember this gloomy period, as I remember with thankfulness how I was stayed and comforted by two women, of whom one was a Saint; and the other was—well, Heaven forbid that I should call her a Sinner, in whom I never found the least blemish: but not, at least, a Christian. The first offered up prayers for me day and night, wrestling in prayer like Jacob, for the open manifestation of my innocence. Alice was filled with a sublime faith. The Lord whom she worshipped was very near to

her. He would destroy His enemies; He would preserve the innocent; the wicked would be cast down and put to perpetual shame. Never have I witnessed a faith so simple and so strong. Yet to all seeming; to the conspirators themselves; I had not a single witness whom I could call in my defence: that a man was poor favoured the chance of his becoming a robber; that a brother-in-law, also a prisoner in the Rules, should be ready to say that I was incapable of such an action could not help. What could we allege against the clear and strong evidence that the four perjured villains would offer when they should stand up, and swear away my life? 'Have courage,' said Alice. 'Help cometh from the Lord. He will have mercy upon the child and—oh! Will—Will—He will have mercy upon the father of the child.'

Mr. Dewberry came often. He had little to tell me. Jenny had gone away. Jenny had not told him what she was doing. 'Sir,' he said, 'but for the confidence I have in that incomparable woman and in her assurances I should feel anxious. For as yet, and we are within a fortnight of the trial, I have not a single witness who can prove the real character of the pretended Divine and the pretended country gentleman. But since Madam assures us——' He produced his snuff-box and offered it—'Why—then, Sir—in that case—I believe in the success of your defence.'

CHAPTER X.

THE SAME OFFER.

Thus I passed that weary and anxious imprisonment. The way of getting through the day wrs always the same. Soon after daylight, I went out and walked in the yards

for half an hour. The early morning, indeed, was the only time of the day when a man of decent manners could venture abroad even on the State side. At that time the visitors had not yet begun to arrive; the men were still sleeping off their carouse of the evening before; only a few wretches to whom a dismal foreboding of the future, a guilty conscience, an aching heart, would not allow sleep, crept dolefully about the empty yards; restlessly sitting or standing: if they spoke to each other, it was with distracted words showing that they knew not what they said. Alas! The drunken orgies of the others caused them at least some relief from the terrible sufferings of remorse and looking forward. It is not often that one can find an excuse for drunkenness.

After this melancholy walk I returned to my cell, where I played for an hour or two, afterwards reading or meditating. But always my thoughts turned to the impending trial. I represented myself called upon to make my own defence: I read it aloud: I failed to impress the Jury: the Judge summed up: the Jury retired: cold beads stood upon my forehead: I trembled: I shook: the verdict was Guilty: the Judge assumed the black cap—— Verily I suffered, every day, despite the assurance of Jenny and Mr. Dewberry, all the tortures of one convicted and condemned to death. If my heart were examined after my death, sure I am that a black cap would be found engraven upon it, to show the agonies which I endured.

About one o'clock Alice arrived, sometimes with Tom, sometimes alone. As for Tom he had quickly rallied and had now completely accepted the assurance that an acquittal was certain: his confidence would have been wonderful but for the consideration that it was not his own neck that was in danger but that of his brother-in-law. The child was not allowed to be brought into the

prison for fear of the fever which always lurks about the wards and cells and corridors. In the afternoon, while we were talking, Jenny herself, when she was not on her mysterious journeys, came wearing a domino. About four o'clock, Tom departed and, a little after, Alice. Then I was left alone to sleep and reflection for twelve hours.

This was the daily routine. On Sunday there was service, in the chapel, made horrid by the condemned prisoners in their pew sitting round the empty coffin: and by the ribaldry and blasphemous jests of the prisoners themselves. Not even in the chapel could they refrain.

One afternoon there was a surprise. We were sitting in conversation together, Alice and Jenny with my brother-in-law Tom, and myself, when we received a visit from no less a person than Mr. Probus himself. That Prince of villains had the audacity to call in person upon me. He stood in the doorway, his long, lean body bent, wearing a smile that had evidently been borrowed for the occasion. I sprang to my feet with indignation. My arm was gently touched. Jenny sat beside me, but a little behind.

'Hush!' she whispered. 'Let him say what he has to say. Sit down. Do not answer by a single word.'

Mr. Probus looked disconcerted to see me resume my chair and make as if I neither saw nor heard.

'You did not expect, Mr. Halliday, to see me here?'

I made no reply.

'I am astonished, I confess, to find myself here, after all that has passed. Respect for the memory of my late employer and client, Sir Peter Halliday, must be my excuse—my only excuse. Respect, and, if I may be permitted to add, compassion—compassion, Madam'—he bowed to Alice.

'Compassion, Sir, is a Christian virtue,' she said, with

such emphasis on the adjective as to imply astonishment at finding that quality in Mr. Probus.

'Assuredly, Madam—assuredly, which is the reason why I cultivate it—sometimes to my own loss—my own loss.'

'Sir,' Alice went on, 'you cannot but be aware that your presence here is distasteful. Will you be so good as to tell us what you have to say?'

'Certainly, Madam. I think I have seen you before. You are Mr. William Halliday's wife. This gentleman I have not seen before.'

'He is my brother.'

'Your brother—And the lady who prefers to wear a domino?' For Jenny had made haste to replace that disguise. 'No doubt it is proper in Newgate—but is it necessary among friends?'

'This lady is my cousin,' said Alice. 'She will please herself as to what she wears.'

'Your cousin. We are therefore, as one may say, a family party. The defendant; his wife: his brother-in-law: his cousin. This is very good. This is what I should have desired above all things had I prayed upon my way hither. A family party.'

'Mr. Probus,' said Alice, 'if this discourse is to continue beware how you speak of prayers.' Never had I seen her face so set, so full of righteous wrath, with so much repression. The man quaked under her eyes.

'I come to business,' he said. 'I fear there is a spirit of suspicion, even of hostility, abroad. Let that pass. I hope, indeed, to remove it. Now, if you please, give me your attention.'

He was now the lawyer, alert and watchful. 'Your trial, Mr. Halliday, takes place in a short time—a few days. I do not know what defence you will attempt—I hope you may be successful—I have thought upon the

subject, and, I confess—well—I can only say that I do not know what kind of defence will be possible in a case so clear and so well attested.'

'Hush!' Jenny laid her hand again on my arm. 'Hush!' she whispered.

I restrained myself and still sat in silence.

'Let me point out to you—in a moment you will understand why—how you stand. You know, of course, yet it is always well to be clear in one's mind—the principal evidence is that given by those two gentlemen from the country, the young squire of Cumberland—or is it Westmoreland?—and the clergyman of the Sister Kingdom. I have naturally been in frequent communication with those two gentlemen. I find that they are both kept in London to the detriment of their own affairs: that they would willingly get the business despatched quickly, so that they would be free to go home again: that they bear no malice—none whatever: one because he is a clergyman, and therefore practises forgiveness as a Christian duty: the other because he is a gentleman who scorns revenge, and, besides, was not the attacked, but the attacking party. "So far," says the noble-hearted gentleman, "from desiring to hang the poor wretch, I would willingly suffer him to go at large." This is a disposition of mind which promises a great deal. I have never found a more happy disposition in any witness before. No resentment: no revenge: no desire for a fatal termination to the trial. It is wonderful and rare. So I came over to tell you what they say and to entreat you to make use of this friendly temper while it lasts. They might—I do not say they will—but they might be induced to withdraw altogether from the trial, in which case the prosecution would fall to the ground. For the case depends wholly upon their evidence. For myself, as you know, I arrived by accident

upon the scene, and was too late to see anything. Mr. Merridew tells me that what he saw might have been a fight rather than a robbery; I ought not to have revealed this weak point in the evidence, but I am all for mercy—all for mercy. So I say, that if their evidence is not forthcoming, the prosecution must fall through, and then, dear Sir, liberty would be once more your happy lot.' He stopped and folded his arms.

I had not offered him a chair partly because he was Mr. Probus and I would not suffer him to sit in my presence: partly because there was no chair to offer him.

'These gentlemen, Sir,' said Tom, 'are willing, we understand, to retire from the case.'

'I would not say willing. I would rather say, not unwilling.'

'Do they,' Tom asked, 'demand money as a bribe, as a price for retiring?'

'No, Sir. These gentlemen are far above any such consideration. I believe they would be simply contented with such a sum of money as would meet their personal expenses and their losses by this prolonged stay.'

'And to how much may these losses and expenses, taken together, amount?'

'I hear that his Reverence has lost a valuable Lectureship, which has been given to another in his absence: and that the Squire has sustained losses among his cattle and his horses also owing to his absence.'

'And the combined figures, Sir, which would cover these losses?'

'I cannot say positively. Probably the clergyman's losses would be represented by £400 and the Squire's by £600. There would be my own costs in the case as well—but they are—as usual—a trifle.'

'And suppose we were to pay this money,' Tom con-

tinued, 'what should we have to prove that they would not give their evidence?'

'Sir—There you touch me on the tenderest point—the "pundonor," as the Spaniards say. You should lodge the money with any person in whom we could agree as a person of honour—and after the case for the prosecution had broken down—not before—he should give me that money. Observe that on the part of these two simple gentlemen, there is trust, even in an attorney—in myself.'

I said nothing, for as the man knew that I could not find a tenth part of the sum, I knew there was something behind. What it was I guessed very well. And, in fact, Mr. Probus immediately showed what it was.

'Mr. Halliday,' he said, 'I believe that I know your circumstances. I have on one or two occasions had to make myself acquainted with them. I shall not give offence if I suppose that you cannot immediately raise the sum of £1,000, even to save your life.'

He spoke to me, but he looked at Alice.

'He cannot, certainly,' said Alice, 'either immediately or in any time proposed.'

'Quite so. Now, this is a case of life or death—life or death, Sir: life or death, Madam: an honourable life—a long life for your husband: or a shameful death—a shameful death: shameful to him: shameful to you: shameful to your child or children.'

'Hush!' whispered Jenny, laying a repressive hand again upon my shoulder, for again I was boiling over with indignation. What! The author and contriver of this shameful death was to come and call attention to the disgrace of which he was the sole cause! Had I been left to myself without Alice or Jenny, I would have brained the old villain. But I obeyed and sat in silence, answering nothing.

'Consider, Madam'—he continued to address Alice—'this is not a time for false pride or for obstinacy, or even for standing out for better terms. Once more I make the same offer which I made before. Let him sell his chance of a certain succession of which he knows. Let him do that, and all his difficulties and troubles will vanish like the smoke of a bonfire. I tell you plainly, Madam, that I can control the appearance of this evidence without which the prosecution can do nothing. I will control it. If he agrees to sell, your husband shall walk out, on the day of the trial, a free man.' He drew out of his pocket a pocket-book and from that a document which I remembered well—the deed of sale or transfer.

Nobody replied. Alice looked at me anxiously. I remained silent and dogged.

'Two years ago—or somewhere about that time—I made the same proposal to him. I offered him £3,000 down for his share of an estate which might never be his—or only after long years—I offered him £3,000 down. It was a large sum of money. He refused. A day or two afterwards he found himself in the King's Bench Prison. I would recall that coincidence to you. Four or five weeks ago I made a similar offer. This time I proposed £4,000 down. He refused again, blind to his own interest. A few days afterwards he found himself within these walls on a capital charge. A third time, and the last time, I make him another offer. This time I raise the sum to £5,000 in order to cover the losses of those two witnesses, and in addition to the money, which is a large sum, enough to carry you on in comfort and in credit, I offer your husband the crowning gift of life. Life—do you hear, woman! Life: and honour: and credit—life—life—life—I say.'

His face was troubled: his accents were eager: he was

not acting: he felt that he was offering me far more than anything he had ever offered me before.

'Hush,' whispered Jenny, keeping me quiet again—for all the time I was longing to spring to my feet and to let loose a tongue of fiery eloquence. But to sit quite quiet and to say nothing was galling.

'Take it, Will, take it,' said Tom. 'If the gentleman can do what he promises, take it. Life and liberty—I say—before all.'

'Sir,' said Alice—her voice was gentle, but it was strong: her face was sweet, but it was firm. The man saw and listened—and misunderstood. 'I know the mind of my husband in this matter. For reasons which you understand, he will not speak to you. The money that was devised by his father to the survivor of the two—his cousin or himself—has always been accepted by him as a proof that at the end his father desired him to understand that he was not wholly unforgiven: that there was a loophole of forgiveness, but he did not explain what that was: that should my husband, who has no desire to see the death of his cousin, survive Mr. Matthew, he will receive the fortune as a proof that a life of hard and honest work has been accepted by his father in full forgiveness. Sir, my husband considers his father's wishes as sacred. Nothing—no pressure of poverty—no danger such as the present will ever make him consent to sign the document you have so often submitted to him.'

'Then'—Mr. Probus put back his paper—'if this is your last word—remember—you have but a few days left. Nothing can save you—nothing—nothing—nothing. You have but a few days before you are condemned—a week or two more of life. Is this your last word?'

'It is our last word, Sir,' said Alice.

'She is right—Will is right,' cried Tom. 'Hark ye—

Mr. Attorney. There is foul play here. We may find it out yet, with the help of God. Shall I put him out of the door, Alice?'

'He will go of his own accord, Tom. Will you leave us, Sir?'

'Yes, I will leave you.' He shook his long forefinger in my face. 'Ha! I leave you to be hanged: you shall have your miserable neck twisted like a chicken, and your last thought shall be that you threw your life away—no—that by dying you give your cousin all.'

So he flung out of the room and left us looking blankly at each other.

Then Jenny spoke.

'You did well, Will, to preserve silence in the presence of the wretch. We all do well to preserve silence about your defence. You dear people. I have counted up the cost. It will be more than at first I thought, because the case must be made complete, so complete that there can be no doubt, I promise you.' She took off her domino: her face was very pale: I remember now that there was on it an unaccustomed look of nobility such as belongs to one who takes a resolution certain to involve her in great trouble and at the expense of self-sacrifice or martyrdom. 'I promise you,' she said, 'that, cost what it may, the CASE SHALL BE COMPLETE.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE IMPENDING TRIAL.

THE time—the awful time—the day of Fate—drew nearer. Despite the assurances both of Jenny and of her attorney there were moments when anticipation and doubt caused agonies unspeakable. Sometimes I have thought that

ence, I can briefly say, as David [illegible]
me fall into the hands of the Lord, for His m
great: but let me not fall into the hands of man.

Presently it wanted but a week: then six days,

'You should now,' said Mr. Dewberry, 'prepare
out your defence: that is to say, your own speech
trial is over. Take no thought about the evider
counsel will cross-examine the witnesses against
will also examine those for you. Trust your c
doing the best with both. Heaven help two o
them when Mr. Caterham has done with them.' I
ham, K.C., our senior counsel, was reported to b
man at the Old Bailey Bar; with him was Mr.
young man still, quite young, but with a brain
a front of brass. 'You must not leave your def
eloquence of the moment, which may fail you.
down; write it plainly, fully and without passi
who you are; what your occupation; what y
what your rent; what your daily habits; we
called witnesses to establish all these points.
the Court exactly what you have told me. D
[illegible] The plain facts, r

possible, the truth. Sit down, therefore, and relate the facts, exactly as they were. Take care to marshal them in their best and most convincing manner. Many a good cause has been wasted by a careless and ignorant manner of presenting them. In your case first relate the facts as to the alleged assault. Next inform the Court who and what you are. Thirdly relate the circumstances of your relations with Mr. Probus. Fourthly state the reasons why he would profit by your death. Next, call attention to the conversation overheard by Mr. Ramage. Then show that he has on more than one occasion threatened you, and that he has actually imprisoned you in the King's Bench in the hope of moving you. I think that you will have a very moving story to tell, supported, as it will be, by the evidence which has gone before. But you have no time to lose. Such a statement must not be put together in a hurry. When it is finished I will read it over and advise you.'

What was important to me in this advice was the necessity of ordering, or marshalling the facts. To one not accustomed to English Composition such a necessity never occurred, and without such advice I might have presented a confused jumble, a muddled array, of facts not dependent one upon the other, the importance of which would have been lost. However, armed with this advice, I sat down, and after drawing up a schedule or list of divisions, or headings, or chapters, I set to work, trying to keep out everything but the facts. No one will believe how difficult a thing it is to stick to the mere facts and to put in nothing more. Indignation carried me beyond control from time to time. I went out of my way to point to the villainy of Probus: I called the vengeance of Heaven upon him and his colleagues: I appealed to the unmerited sufferings of my innocent wife: to the shameful future of my

and to seem to read. All this shows the care taken by our ever-watchful attorney, lest anythi happen to hinder the development of the case tended and hoped.

Among other things he called upon Mr. Probı ally on account of another matter.

'I believe,' he said, 'that you are the at Mr. Matthew Halliday?'

'I have that honour.'

'Yes. I observed the fact in reading an a yours in connection with a case in which I ar for the defence, the case of Mr. William Hallid Newgate on a charge of highway robbery.'

'Defence? He has, then, a defence?'

'A defence? Certainly he has a defence. Ar We have engaged Mr. Caterham, K.C., and M both of whom you probably know, as couns defence. My dear Sir, we have a very go indeed. Let me see. You arrived on the spot after the alleged attack was committed.'

'Certainly. My affidavit and my evidence

indeed I do not wish to ask any questions. I only repeat what I hear in the City. It is there freely stated that the Firm is ruined: that their ships are sold: and that their business is gone.'

'They are injurious and false reports.'

'It is possible. I hope so. Meantime, however, I have come to communicate to you a matter which perhaps you do not know; but which it is important that you should know. The person chiefly concerned gives me permission to speak of it. Perhaps you do know it already. Perhaps your client has not concealed it from you. Do you, for instance, know that Mr. Matthew Halliday is a married man?'

Mr. Probus started. 'Married?' he cried. 'Married? No, certainly not.'

'It is evident that you do not know your client's private history. He has been married two years and more. He does not, however, cohabit with his wife. They are separated—by consent.'

'Matthew married?'

'They are separated, I say. Such separation, however, does not release the husband from the liability of his wife's debts.'

'Has his wife—has Mrs. Matthew—contracted debts?' He looked very uneasy.

'His wife—she is a client of mine—has contracted very large debts. She may possibly make an arrangement with her creditors. But she may not. In the latter case, she will send them to your client, who will hand them over to you. They will demand payment without delay. Failing payment they will take all the steps that the law permits—also without delay. That is why I thought it best to communicate the facts to you. My client authorized me to do so.'

Mr. Probus made no answer. He could not understand what this meant.

'If it is your interest to postpone bankruptcy, Mr. Probus, it may be wiser, for some reason or other, to force it on. I only came to tell you of this danger which threatens your client—not you, of course. But your client, whose wife is mine.'

Mr. Probus made at first no reply. He was thinking what this might mean. He was, of course, too wary not to perceive that the threat of forcing on bankruptcy was part of the defence, though in an indirect manner.

'Have you,' he asked presently, 'any knowledge of the amount of these debts?'

'I believe they amount to over £40,000.'

Mr. Probus groaned aloud.

'I thought I would prepare your mind for the blow, which may happen any day. Let me see. The trial takes place next Wednesday—next Wednesday. I dare say the creditors will wait till after that event. Good-morning, Mr. Probus.'

He was going away when Mr. Probus called him back.

'You are aware, sir, that I made the prisoner a handsome offer?'

'I have been told that you made a certain offer.'

'I offered him the very large sum of £5,000 if he would sell his succession. If he consents the principal witnesses in the case shall not appear.'

'Mr. Probus, as the case stands now I would not take £50,000 for the price of his chance.'

Again he was going away, and again Mr. Probus called him back.

'We were speaking,' he said, 'of the defence of that unhappy young man, Mr. William Halliday. Of course I am concerned in the matter only as an accidental

bystander—and, of course, an old friend of the family. There is to be a defence, you say.'

'Assuredly.'

'I have always understood that the young man was quite poor, and that his wife's friends were also quite poor.'

'That is true. But a man may be quite poor, yet may have friends who will fight every point rather than see the man condemned to death—and on a false charge.'

'False?'

'Quite false, I assure you.'

'Sir, you surprise me. To be sure I did not see the assault. Yet the evidence was most clear. Two gentlemen, unknown to each other—another unknown to both who witnessed the affair—how can such evidence as that be got over?'

'Well, Mr. Probus, it is not for me to say how it will be got over. You are, I believe, giving evidence on what may be called a minor point; you will therefore be in the Court on the occasion of the Trial. I can say nothing, of course; but I should advise all persons engaged in the case to abstain from appearing if possible. I am assured that things quite unexpected will take place. Meantime, to return to the point for which I came here—advise your client to prepare himself to meet claims rising out of his wife's debts to the sum of many thousands.'

'How many thousands, did you say?'

'Forty thousand, I believe.'

'Good Heavens, sir, what can a woman be doing to get through such an enormous sum?'

'Indeed, I cannot inform you. It is an age in which women call themselves the equals of men. Your client, Mr. Probus, has got through a great deal more than that in the same time, including, I believe, the £25,000 which you lent him and which he cannot repay——'

'What do you know about these affairs, sir?'

'Nothing—nothing. I shall see you in Court on the day of the Trial, Mr. Probus.'

He went away leaving, as he intended, his brother in the law in an anxious condition, and having said nothing that would lead him to suspect that the conspiracy was entirely discovered, and would be laid open in court.

Then came the last day before the Trial.

In the afternoon all my friends were gathered together in my cell. The attorney had read for the last time my statement of defence.

He looked through it once more. 'I do not believe,' he said, 'that the case will get so far. Whatever happens, Mr. Halliday, you will do well to remember that you have to thank Madam here, and I do not believe it will be possible for you to thank her enough, until you find out for yourself the sacrifices she has made for you and the risks she is running on your behalf. I can but hope, Madam, that the sacrifices may be made up to you, and that the risks may prove illusory.'

She smiled, but it was a wan smile. 'Whatever the result,' she said, 'believe me, Sir, I shall never regret either the sacrifices, if you call them such, or the risks, if by either we can defeat this most abominable conspiracy.'

'I was in hopes,' said the attorney, 'that Mr. Probus might be terrified, and so might withdraw at the last moment. It is easy to withdraw. He has only to order the two principal witnesses not to attend, when the case falls to the ground. As we are now free from all anxiety,' I sighed, 'well, from all but the very natural anxiety that belongs to a prison and to the uncertainty of the law, it is better for us that he should put in all the witnesses, when we can establish our charge of conspiracy. I marvel, indeed, greatly that a man so astute should not perceive

that defence, where a King's Counsel and a Junior of great repute are engaged, must mean a serious case, and that a serious case only means denial of the main charge. Else there would be no defence at all. Well,' he rose—'I drink your health, Mr. Halliday, in this excellent Madeira, and a speedy release to you.'

'And I, Will,' said Tom, pouring out another glass, 'I, too, drink a speedy release to you.'

So they went away.

Then Jenny got up. 'Cousin Will,' she said sadly, 'I have done all I could for you. If the Black Jack knew to-night what would be said in Court to-morrow, there would be murder. They will all be in Court—every one—to hear the splendid perjuries of the Bishop and the Captain. Those two worthies expect a brave day: indeed, it will be a great day for them, yet not quite in the manner they anticipate. Well, 'tis the last night in prison, Will. To-morrow thou wilt be back again in the Cottage beside the river. Happy Will! Happy Alice! As for me——' she sighed wearily.

'Why, Jenny, as for you—what can happen to you?'

'Nothing can happen to me,' she replied dolorously.

'Then, why so sad?'

'Because, from the outset I have foreseen something dark and dreadful, but I knew not what. I see myself in a strange place—but I know not where. I look around at the places which I know—and I cannot see myself. I am neither at Drury Lane nor the Garden: nor am I at Soho Square. I look in the grave, but I am not there. I am to live—but I know not where or how. All is to be changed——'

'Jenny,' Alice caught her hand. 'This reading of the future. It is wicked, since the Lord hath not thought fit to reveal what is to happen.'

She repeated stupidly, as one who understands not.

'Since the Lord—what Lord?—what do you mean? Alice, how can I help it? I *can* read the future. Sometimes it is like a printed book to me. Well—no matter. Farewell, Will. Sleep sound to-night. To-morrow we shall meet in the Court. Good-night, dear woman.' She threw her arms round Alice, kissed her and went away.

And as for what passed between husband and wife—what tender things were said—what prayers for faith—on the eve of the day of Life or Death: of Honour or of Shame; shall they, too, be written on a page which is open to every curious eye and to every mocking eye?

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIAL.

It is a most terrible thing for a man of sensibility to stand in the dock of the Old Bailey before the awful array of Judges, Lord Mayor, Sheriffs and Aldermen. I know very well that most of the hardened wretches that stand there have no sense of terror and little of anxiety. For them the Judge is like that fabled Sister who cuts the thread of life: they have come to the end of their rope: their time is up: they are fatalists in a stupid way: the sentence is passed: they bear no malice against the informer: the game has been played according to the rules—what more can a man desire? Tyburn awaits them. And afterwards? They neither know nor do they care.

Early on the morning of the trial, Mr. Dewberry came to see me. He was cheerful, and rubbed his hands with great satisfaction. 'The case,' he said, 'is complete. Never was a case more complete or more astonishing, as you shall see.' He would not explain further: he said

that walls, even in Newgate, have ears: that I must rely upon his word. 'Sir,' he said, 'so much I will explain because it may give you ease. Never has a man gone forth to be tried for his life, with a greater confidence in the result than you ought to have. And, with that assurance enter the Court with a light heart.'

They knocked off my irons before going into Court. Thus relieved, I was marched along a dismal passage, leading from the prison to the Old Bailey. The Court was crowded, not so much out of compliment to me, but because it was bruited abroad among the rogues of St. Giles's that two of their body were that day about to achieve greatness. They were, truly: but not in the way that was expected. The crowd, in fact, consisted chiefly of pickpockets and thieves, with their ladies. And the heroes of the day were the Bishop and the Captain.

At first, a prisoner entering the Court, sees nothing. When the mist before his eyes clears away he observes the jury being sworn in—one after the other, they lift the great chained Bible and kiss its leathern cover, black with ten thousand kisses, and take their seats: he observes the counsel arranging their papers: the officers of the court standing about and the crowd in the gallery and about the doors: the box for the witnesses—my heart sank when I saw sitting together my four enemies, looking calm and assured, as if there was no doubt possible as to the results. Nay, the Captain seemed unable to repress or to conceal the pride he felt in imagination, at thinking of the figure he should cut. Mr. Ramage, my own witness, I saw modestly sitting in a corner. Tom Shirley, another witness for me, if he would prove of any use, was also there. As I entered the dock Mr. Probus turned and his lips moved as if he was speaking to Tom. I could not hear what he said, but I knew it, without the necessity of

ears. He said, 'Sir, I saw you in Newgate three weeks ago. Your friend might have saved his life, had he accepted my offer. It is now too late.' Then he turned his hatchet face to me and grinned. Well—he grins no longer. Under the Dock stood Alice, and with her, closely veiled, Jenny herself. They took my hands: Alice held the right and Jenny the left. 'Courage, my dear,' said Alice. 'It will soon be over now.' 'It is all over already,' whispered Jenny. 'There is such evidence as will astonish you—and the whole world.' She kissed my hand and dropped a tear upon it. I was to learn afterwards what she meant, and what were her own sacrifices and perils in bringing forward this evidence.

Then Mr. Dewberry came bustling up. 'That is your lawyer, Mr. Caterham, King's Counsel, now arranging his papers. I was with him yesterday. He will make a great case—a very great case—out of this. The attorney arranges it all and the higher branch gets the credit of it all. Never mind. That is your Junior, behind, Mr. Stanton. There's a head for you: there's an eye. I can always tell what they think of the case by the way they arrange their papers. The Counsel in front of him is Serjeant Cosins, King's Counsel, an able man—oh, yes—an able man: he conducts the prosecution. We shall open his eyes presently. He thinks he has got an ordinary case to conduct. He will see. He will see.'

Then the Judges came in: the Lord Mayor, Mr. Justice Parker, the Aldermen, the Recorder, and the Sheriffs. The Lord Mayor sat in the middle under the great sword of Justice: but the case was conducted by Mr. Justice Parker, who sat on his right hand. I looked along the row of faces on the Bench. They all seemed white, cold, stern, hard and unforgiving. Despite assurances, my heart sank low.

I pass over the reading of the indictment, my pleading and the opening of the case. The Prosecutor said that although it was a most simple case, which would not occupy the attention of the Court very long, it was at the same time one of the most flagrant and audacious robberies that had ever been brought before the Court of the Old Bailey: that the facts were few: that he was not aware of any possible line of defence: 'Oh yes,' observed my Counsel, smiling, 'a very possible line of defence': that he, for one, should be prepared to receive any line of defence that could be set up. But he thought his learned brother would not waste the time of the Court.

He then rehearsed the history of the facts and proceeded to call the witnesses. First he called Samuel Carstairs, Doctor of Divinity (I do not intend to set down the whole of the evidence given by him or by the others because you already know it).

The Doctor, with alacrity, stepped into the witness-box: he was clean shaven, in a new wig, a silken cassock; snow white bands; and a flowing gown. But that his face was red and his neck swollen and his appearance fleshy and sensual—things which may sometimes be observed even among the City Clergy—he presented the appearance of a prosperous ecclesiastic. For my own part I can never satisfy myself whether he was in Holy Orders at all. One hopes, for the sake of the Church, that he was not. After kissing the Testament with fervour, he turned an unblushing front to the Prosecutor. He said that he was a Clergyman, a Doctor of Divinity, formerly of Trinity College, Dublin, and some time the holder of certain benefices in the neighbourhood of that city. He deposed that on the night in question he was making his way through Leicester Fields to Charing Cross at the time of nine in the evening, or thereabouts: that suddenly a young

man rushed out of some dark recess and flourished a cudgel over him, crying, 'Your money or your life!' That being a man of peace, as becomes his profession, he instantly complied with the demand and handed over his purse: that he also cried out, either on account of the extremity of his fear, or for help: that help came in the shape of a stranger, who felled the ruffian: that they called the watch: carried the senseless robber to the guard-house, and that the witness's purse was found in his pocket.

My counsel deferred cross-examining this witness for the present.

Next came the Captain. He, too, stood unabashed while he poured out his tale of perjury. He assumed the style and title of a Gentleman from the North, Mr. Ferdinando Fenwick: and he entirely bore out the previous witness's evidence. My counsel also deferred his cross-examination of this witness.

Mr. Merridew was the third witness. He followed suit. He deposed that he was a Sheriff's officer. He had seen the assault and the rescue: he had also helped to carry the robber to the round house. This witness's cross-examination was also deferred.

Mr. Probus, attired in black velvet with fine lace ruffles and neckerchief, so that his respectable appearance could not but impress the jury, said that he was passing the watch-house, by accident, about midnight, having been summoned by a client, when he saw an unconscious figure carried in: that he followed from motives of humanity, hoping to be of use to some fellow Christian: that he then perceived, to his amazement, that the robber was none other than the son of his old friend and employer the late Sir Peter Halliday, Alderman and ex-Lord Mayor: that he saw the worthy clergyman's purse taken from his pocket, so that there could be no doubt of his guilt. He

also added that it was four years and more since Sir Peter had turned his son out of doors, since when he believed that the young man had earned a precarious living by playing the fiddle to sailors and such low company.

Then the cross-examination began.

My counsel asked him first, whether he knew any of the three preceding witnesses. He did not: they were strangers to him. Had he never seen the man Merridew? He never had. Did not Merridew owe him money? He did not. He was now attorney to Mr. Matthew Halliday. Had he ever taken the man Merridew to Mr. Halliday's counting-house? He had not. 'In fact, Mr. Probus, you know nothing at all about Mr. Merridew?' 'Nothing.' 'And nothing about the other two men?' 'Nothing.'

'I come now, Mr. Probus, to a question which will astonish the Court. Will you tell me in what way the prisoner's death will benefit you?'

'In no way.'

'Oh! In no way. Come, Sir, think a little. Collect yourself, I pray you. You are attorney to Mr. Matthew Halliday. You have lent him money?' No answer. 'Please answer my question.' No answer. 'Never mind, I shall find an answer for you before long. Meantime I inform the Jury that you have lent him £25,000 on the condition that he pays 15 per cent. interest on £40,000, the sum to be repaid. That is the exact description of the transaction, I believe?'

He replied unwillingly, 'If you please to say so.'

'Very well. Now your client has spent. or lost, the whole of his money and yours—do not deny the fact, because I am going to prove it presently. He cannot pay you one farthing. In fact, before long the firm of Halliday Brothers will become bankrupt.' (There was a movement

and a whisper among the Aldermen and Sheriffs on the Bench.) 'Is this true or not?' No answer.

'My Lud, I press for an answer. This is a most important question. I can find an answer from another witness, but I must have an answer from the witness now in the box.'

'Answer the question immediately, Sir,' said the Judge.

'I do not know.'

'You do not know? Come, Sir, have you been informed, or have you not, by Mr. Matthew Halliday himself, of his position?'

'I have not.'

'You have not. Mark his answer, gentlemen of the Jury. Do not forget his statement. He says that he knows nothing and has been told nothing of his client's present unfortunate condition. Let us go on. The late Sir Peter Halliday left a large sum of money—£100,000, I believe—to the survivor of two—either his son or his nephew?'

'That is true.'

'If Halliday Brothers becomes bankrupt, your claim would rank with those of the other creditors?'

'I suppose so.'

'In which case you would get little or nothing of the £40,000. But if the prisoner could be persuaded to sell his chance of succession before the declaration of bankruptcy, your client could raise money on that succession out of which you could be paid in full, if he consented?'

'Yes, if he consented.'

'You have already made three several attempts to make him sell, have you not?'

'Acting by my client's instructions.'

'The first time, when he refused, you threatened revenge, did you not?'

'I did not.'

'You then clapped him in a debtors' prison on a trumped-up charge of debt?'

'It was a debt due to an estate placed in my hands.'

'The prisoner denied the debt: said that the instrument was given to him by the owner, did he not?'

'Perhaps.'

'But you put him in prison and kept him there?'

'I did, acting for my clients, the executors.'

'The next time you called upon him and offered to buy his share was about six weeks ago?'

'It was, acting on instructions from my client.'

'He refused. You then threatened him again?'

'I did not.'

'Two days afterwards the alleged robbery took place at which you were an accidental observer?'

'Accidental.'

'I said so—accidental. Now, if this case should prove fatal to the prisoner, on his death your client, not a bankrupt, would take the whole of the £100,000?'

'He would.'

'You would then expect to be paid?' No answer. 'I say, you would then expect to be paid?'

'I should hope to be.'

'In full?'

'I should hope so.'

'Then you would be the better by £40,000 by the execution of the prisoner?'

'If you put it so, I should.'

'You made a third and last attempt, a few days ago, to obtain his consent?'

'I did, acting on my client's instructions.'

'When he was in Newgate. There were present two other friends of the prisoner. You then offered, if he

would sign the document, to withdraw the principal witnesses?'

'I did not.'

'I put it in another way. You promised, if he would sign, that the principal witnesses should not appear?'

'I did not.'

'You swear that you did not?'

'I swear that I did not.'

'You say that you have no power to withdraw witnesses?'

'I have no power to withdraw witnesses.'

'You have no power over the case at all?'

'None.'

Mr. Caterham sat down. Serjeant Cosins stood up.

'You might be the better by the prisoner's death. You are not however in any way concerned with the case except as an accidental observer?'

'Not in any way.'

'And you are not in any way acquainted with the witnesses who are chiefly concerned?'

'Not at all.'

Mr. Probus sat down.

Mr. Caterham called again the Rev. Dr. Samuel Carstairs.

'My Lud,' he began, 'I must ask that none of the witnesses in this case be allowed to leave the court without your Ludship's permission.'

The Bishop entered the box, but with much less assurance than he had previously assumed. And the cross-examination began.

I then understood what Jenny meant when she talked of making the case complete. He swore again that his name was Carstairs: that he had held preferment in the county of Dublin: he named, in fact, three places: he had never

used any other name: he was not once called Onslow, at another time Osborne: at another Oxborough: he knew nothing about these names: he had never been tried at York for fraud: or at Winchester for embezzlement: he had never been whipped at the cart-tail at Portsmouth. As these lies ran out glibly I began to take heart. I looked at Probus: he was sitting on the bench, his fingers interlaced, cold drops of dew rising upon his forehead and nose. But the Bishop held out bravely, that is, with a brazen impudence.

'You know, Doctor, I believe, the Black Jack?'

'A tavern, is it? No, sir, I do not. One of my profession should not be seen in taverns.'

'Yet surely you know the Black Jack, close to St. Giles's Church?'

'No, sir, I am a stranger in London.'

'Do you know the nickname of the "Bishop"?'

'No.'

'Oh! you never were called the "Bishop"?'

'No.'

'Do you know the gallant gentleman who rescued you?'

'No, I do not.'

'You do not know him? Never met him, I suppose, at the Black Jack?'

'Never.'

'Never? Do you know the other witness, Mr. Merridew?'

'No, I do not.'

'Where were you staying for the night when this romantic incident happened?'

For the first time the Bishop hesitated. 'I—I—forget,' he said.

'Come, come, you cannot forget so simple a thing, you know. Where were you staying?'

'It was in a street off the Strand—I forget its name—I am a stranger to this city.'

'Well—where did you stay last night?'

'In the same street—I forget its name.'

'Not at the Black Jack, St. Giles's?'

He was pressed upon this point, but nothing could be got out of him. He stuck to the point—he had forgotten the name of the street, and he knew nothing of the Black Jack.

So he stood down. The Captain was called by the name he gave himself—Ferdinando Fenwick. He said he had never been known by any other name, that he had no knowledge of the name of Tom Kestever. He had never heard that name. Nor did he know of any occasion on which the said Tom Kestever had been ducked for a pick-pocket: flogged for a rogue: imprisoned and tried on a capital charge for cattle lifting. Oh! Jenny, the case was well got up, truly. He, too, had never heard of the Black Jack, and stoutly stood it out that he was a gentleman of Cumberland. Asked what village or town of Cumberland, he named Whitehaven as the place in which he was born and had his property—to wit, five farms contiguous to the town and two or three messuages in the town.

When this evidence was concluded a juryman rose and asked permission of the Court to put a question to the witness, which was granted him.

'Those farms,' he said, 'are contiguous to Whitehaven? Yes, and you were born in that town? What was your father by occupation?'

'He was a draper.'

'My Lord,' said the Juryman, 'I am myself a native of Whitehaven. I am the son of the only draper in the town. I am apparently about the same age as the witness. I have never seen him in the town. There is no reputable

tradesman of that name in the town, or anywhere near it. There are gentlefolk of the name, but in Northumberland.'

'I wish, Sir,' said the Counsel, 'that I had you in the box.'

'The statement of a Juryman is not evidence,' the Prosecuting Counsel interposed.

'I fear, my learned brother,' said the Judge, 'that when the Jury retire, it will become a strong piece of evidence, whatever direction I may give them.'

The Serjeant declined to re-examine this evidence.

Then my counsel called Mr. Merridew, who very reluctantly got into the box again.

He denied solemnly that he knew either of the preceding witnesses. He denied that he knew the Black Jack. He owned, with a pretence at pride, that he had frequently served his country by informing against rogues and had taken the reward to which he was entitled. He denied that he encouraged young fellows to become highwaymen in hopes of securing the higher reward. He denied that he knew Mr. Probus. He swore that he should not benefit by the conviction of the prisoner.

You observe that the object of the Counsel was to make every one plunge deeper into the mire of perjury. His case was strong indeed, or he would not have followed this method.

The Counsel then called half a dozen witnesses in succession. They were turnkeys from York, Winchester, Reading and Portsmouth and other places. They identified the Rev. Dr. Samuel Carstairs, D.D., as a person notoriously engaged in frauds for which an educated person was necessary. He had been imprisoned for two years at Winchester for embezzlement: for a twelvemonth with a flogging at York for fraud: he was whipped through the

High Street of Portsmouth and down to Point and back again for similar practices. They also identified the Captain as a rogue from tender years: hardly a whipping-post anywhere but knew the sound of his voice: hardly a prison in which he had not passed some of his time.

And now the case looked brighter. Everyone was interested, from the Aldermen to the Jury: it was a case of surprises: only Serjeant Cosins stood with his papers in his hand looking perplexed and annoyed. So far there was no doubt about the two fellows, the authors of the charge, being notorious and arrant rogues. A very pitiful figure they cut, as they sat side by side on the witnesses' bench. Even their own friends in the gallery were laughing at them, for the admiration of the rogue is for successful roguery, while for detected roguery he has nothing but contempt.

Then the Counsel called John Ramage. He said that he was an accountant in the counting-house of Messrs. Halliday Brothers: that in that capacity he knew the position of the House: that in two years the managing partner, Mr. Matthew Halliday, had reduced the business to a state of insolvency: that they might become bankrupts at any moment: that creditors were pressing, and the end could not be far off. He went on to state that he revealed the secrets of his office because he was informed that the knowledge was necessary for the defence of Mr. William Halliday, and that the safety and innocence of his late master's only son were of far more importance to him than the credit of the House. And here the tears came into his eyes. This, however, was the least important part of the case. For he went on to depose that the position of his desk near the door of Mr. Matthew's office enabled him to hear all that went on: that Mr. Probus was constantly engaged with Mr. Matthew: that every

day there were complaints and quarrels between them: that Mr. Probus wanted his money back, and that Mr. Matthew could not pay him: that every day they ended with the regret that they could not touch this sum of money waiting for the survivor: that every day they sighed to think what a happy event it would be for them both if Mr. William Halliday were dead. That, one day, Mr. Probus said that there were many ways for even a young man to die: he might, for instance, fall into the hands of the law: to this Mr. Matthew gave no reply, but when he was alone began to drink. That Mr. Probus returned the next day with Mr. Merridew, who said that the job was easy and should be done, but he should expect to stand in: he said that the thing would cost a good deal, but that, for a thousand pounds, he thought that Mr. Will Halliday's case might be considered certain. 'When I heard this,' the witness said, 'I hastened to Lambeth, where Mr. Will was living with his wife. I could not see him because he was playing for Madame Vallance's Assembly. I therefore went again to Lambeth the next day, which was Sunday, and I told him all. While I was telling him, Mr. Probus himself came. So they put me in the kitchen where I could hear what was said. Mr. Probus made another effort to persuade Mr. Will to sell his chance of succession. Then he went away in a rage, threatening things. So I implored Mr. Will to get out of the way of the villains. He promised: but it was too late. The next thing I hear is that he has been charged with highway robbery. Mr. Will—the best of men!'

I now thought my case was going pretty well.

There were, however, other witnesses.

To my amazement Jenny's mother appeared. She was dressed up as a most respectable widow with a white cap, a black dress, and a white apron. She curtseyed to the

Court and kissed the book with a smack, as if she enjoyed it.

She said that she was a widow, and respectable: that she kept the Black Jack, which was much frequented by the residents of St. Giles's. The Counsel did not press this point, but asked her if she knew the Rev. Dr. Carstairs. She replied that she knew him, under other names, as a frequenter of her house off and on for many years: that he was familiarly known as the 'Bishop': that she did not inquire into the trades of her customers, but that it was understood that the Bishop was one of those who use their skill in writing for various purposes: for threatening persons who have been robbed: for offering stolen property for sale: for demanding money: for forging documents: and other branches of roguery demanding a knowledge of writing. She showed her own knowledge of the business by her enumeration of the branches. She said, further, that the gentleman had slept at the Black Jack every night for the last two months: that he had a bed there, took his meals there, and carried on his business there. As regards Mr. Ferdinando Fenwick, she knew him as the 'Captain,' or as Tom Kestever, and she identified him in the same way and beyond any power of doubt. As for Merridew, she knew him very well: he was a thief-taker by profession: he gave his man a good run and then laid information against him: he encouraged young rogues and showed them how to advance in their profession: and she deposed that on a certain day Merridew came to the house where the Bishop and the Captain were drinking together and sat with them: that all their talk was about getting a man out of the way: that the Bishop did not like it, but was told by Mr. Merridew very plainly that he must, and that he then assented.

Jenny's sister, Doll, next appeared. She was transformed

into a young and pleasing woman with a silver ring for greater respectability. Her evidence corroborated that of her mother. But she added an important particular, that one morning when there was no one in the place but the Bishop and the Captain, Mr. Probus came with Mr. Merridew and sat conversing with those two gentlemen for a long time.

Then the young fellow called Jack went into the box. By this time the interest of everyone in the court was intense, because here was the unrolling of a plot which for audacity and wickedness was perhaps unequalled. And the wretched man Probus, still writhing in his seat, cast his eyes to the door in hopes of a chance at flight: in his agony his wig was pushed back, and the whole of his head exposed to view. I confess that horror rather than revenge possessed me.

The young fellow called Jack gave his evidence in a straightforward way. He confessed that he had run away from his native village in consequence of an unfortunate love affair; that he had come up to town, hoping to get employment: that he had been taken to the Black Jack by someone who met him in the street: that he had there been introduced to Mr. Merridew, who promised to find him work: that in fact he had been employed by him in shoplifting and in small street robberies: his employer, he explained, would go along the street first and make a sign where he could carry off something: that he was promised promotion to be a highwayman by Mr. Merridew if he should deserve it: that he had been told to keep himself in readiness to help in knocking a gentleman on the head: that the thing was talked over with him by the Bishop and the Captain: that at the last moment they told him they should want none of his help. Asked what he should do after giving this evidence,

replied that if Mr. Merridew got off he should have to enlist in order to save his neck, which would be as good as gone. More he said, but this was the most important.

Then Mr. Caterham called Matthew Halliday.

My unfortunate cousin entered the witness-box pale and trembling. In answer to questions, he acknowledged that he had lost the whole of his fortune and ruined a once noble business in the space of three or four years. He confessed that his bankruptcy was inevitable: that Probus had been urgent with him to get his cousin to sell his chance of succession in order to raise money by which he himself might recover his money: that he was willing to do so if his cousin would sell: but his cousin would not. He said that Mr. Probus had come to him stating that a man's life might be lost in many ways: that, for instance, he might fall into the hands of the law: that he had brought Mr. Merridew, who offered to arrange so that his cousin might lose his life in some such way if he were paid a thousand pounds down; that he would not listen to such detestable overtures; that he heard of his cousin's arrest: that he had informed his cousin's attorney of the offer made him by Probus and Merridew: but he had neither paid nor promised a thousand pounds, or anything at all: and that he had never been a consenting party to the plot.

He was allowed to stand down: he remained in the Court, trembling and shivering, as pitiable an object as the wretched conspirators themselves.

If there had been interest in the case before, judge what it was now in the appearance of the next witness, for there entered the box none other than Jenny herself, the bewitching Jenny. She was all lace and ribbons, as beautiful a creature as one could expect to see anywhere. She smiled upon the Judge and upon the Lord Mayor:

she smiled upon the Jury: she smiled upon me, the prisoner in the Dock. In answer to the questions put to her, she answered, in substance: 'My name is Jenny Halliday. I am the wife of the last witness, Matthew Halliday. I am an actress. I am known by my maiden name, Jenny Wilmot. As an entertainer, I am known as Madame Vallance.' There was now the most breathless attention in Court. 'By birth, I am the daughter of the landlady of the Black Jack. It is a place of resort of the residents of St. Giles's. Most of them, to my certain knowledge, probably all, are thieves. I sometimes go there to see my mother and sister, not to see the frequenters of the place. Whenever I do go there, I always find the two witnesses who just now called themselves Carstairs and Fenwick: at the Black Jack they were always called the Bishop and the Captain. I have always heard, and I understand, that they are rogues of the deepest dye. The Bishop is not a clergyman at all: he is so called because he dresses like a clergyman and can write well: the Captain is a highwayman: most of his fraternity call themselves Captains: he is the son of a butcher in Clare Market. His name is Tom Kestever. Both are Mr. Merridew's men: that is, they have to carry out whatever he orders, and they live in perpetual terror that their time is up. The last time I was in the Black Jack, Merridew came in, drank a glass or two of punch in a friendly way, and so left them. When he said that he did not know the men, it was flat perjury. He was continually in the Black Jack looking up his people; admonishing the young and threatening the elders. Not a rogue in London but knows Mr. Merridew, and trembles at the thought of him.'

Asked about Mr. Probus, she said that she did not know him at all, save by repute. That he constantly threatened the prisoner with consequences if he did not consent to sell

his chance of succession: and that she had been present on a certain occasion in Newgate when Mr. Probus visited the prisoner and offered him there and then, if he would sign the document offered, that the principal witnesses should not appear at the Trial, which would thus fall through.

Asked as to her knowledge of the prisoner, she deposed that she found him in the King's Bench Prison, sent there through the arts of Mr. Probus: that she took him out, paying the detainers: that she then gave him employment in her orchestra: that he was a young gentleman of the highest principle, married to a wife of saintly conduct and character: that he was incapable of crime—that he lived quietly, was not in debt, and received for his work in the orchestra the sum of thirty shillings a week, which was enough for their modest household.

Asked again about her husband, she said that she could not live with him, partly because he was an inveterate gambler: and that to gratify this passion there was nothing he would not sell. That he had gamed away a noble fortune and ruined a noble business: that steps had already been taken to make him bankrupt: and that it was to save his own money that the man Probus had designed this villainy.

'Call Thomas Shirley.' It was the Junior Counsel who rose.

Tom went into the box and answered the preliminary questions. 'Do you remember meeting Mr. Probus in Newgate about a month ago?'

'I do.'

'What offer did he make?'

'He offered my brother-in-law £5,000 down if he would sell his chance of the succession, and further promised that the principal witnesses should not appear.'

'You swear that this was his offer?'

'I swear it.'

The Counsel looked at Serjeant Cosins, who shook his head.

'You may sit down, Sir.'

'My Lud,' said Mr. Caterham, 'my case is completed. I have no other evidence unless you direct me to sweep the streets of St. Giles's and compel them to come in.'

When all the evidence was completed there was a dead silence in the Court. Everybody was silent for a space: the faces of the rogues in the gallery were white with consternation: here were the very secrets of their citadel, their home, the Black Jack, disclosed, and by the very people of the Black Jack, the landlady and her daughters. The Jury looked at each other in amazement. Here was the complete revelation of a plot which for wickedness and audacity went beyond everything ever invented or imagined. What would happen next?

'Brother Cosins,' said the Judge.

He threw his papers on the desk. 'My Lud,' he said, 'I throw down my brief.'

Then the Judge charged the Jury. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'it has been clearly established—more clearly than I ever before experienced, that a wicked—nay a most horrible—crime, designed by one man, carried out by three others, has been perpetrated against the prisoner, William Halliday. It is a case in which everything has been most carefully prepared: the perjury of the witnesses has been established beyond a doubt even though the witnesses have been in part taken from the regions of St. Giles's, and from actual criminals. Gentlemen, there is but one verdict possible.'

They did not leave the box: they conferred for a moment: rose and through their foreman pronounced their verdict—'Not Guilty.' They added a hope that the conspirators would not escape.

'They shall not,' said the Judge. 'William Halliday, the verdict of the jury sets you free. I am happy to say that you leave this Court with an unblemished character: and that you have the most heartfelt commiseration of the Court for your wholly undeserved sufferings and anxiety.' Then the Judge turned to the four. 'I commit Eliezer Probus: Samuel Carstairs alias what he pleases: the man who calls himself Ferdinando Fenwick: and John Merridew for trial on the charge of conspiracy and perjury.'

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COMPANY OF REVENGE.

THE case was over—I stepped out of the Dock: I was free: everybody, including Mr. Caterham, K.C., was shaking my hand: the Lord Mayor sent for me to the Bench and shook my hand warmly: he said that he had known my worthy father, Sir Peter, and that he rejoiced that my innocence had been made as clear as the noonday: all the Jury shook hands with me: my Cousin Tom paid my dues to the prison, without payment of which even a free man, proved innocent, must go back to the prison again and there stay till he discharges them—because a gaoler everywhere has a heart made of flint. At last, surrounded by my friends I went out of Court. Outside in the street there was a crowd who shouted and cried my name with 'Death to the Conspirators!' But I saw many who did not shout. Who were they who had no sympathy with innocence? They stood apart, with lowering faces. They came down from the public gallery where—I was afterwards told—the appearance in that witness-box first of

the well-known landlady of the Black Jack—their ancient friend: next, of her daughter—also their friend: thirdly, of the young fellow called Jack, one of themselves, a rogue and the companion of rogues: and lastly, of the woman of whom they had been so proud, Jenny the actress, Jenny the Orange Girl: Jenny of Drury Lane: filled them with dismay and rage. What? Their own people turn against their own friends? The landlady of the Black Jack, even the landlady of the Black Jack, that most notorious receiver of stolen goods, and harbourer of rogues, to give evidence against her own customers? Thief betray thief? Dog bite dog? Heard ever man the like? Now you understand the lowering and gloomy faces. These people whispered to each other in the Gallery of the Court House: they murmured to each other outside on the pavement: when we climbed into a hackney coach—Jenny—her mother and sister—the young fellow called Jack and myself—they followed us—in pairs;—by fours, talking low and cursing below their breath. After a while they desisted: but one or two of them still kept up with the coach.

I sent Alice home under charge of Tom. I would get home, I said, as quickly as I could, after seeing Jenny safely at her own house.

We arrived at the house in Soho Square. It was empty save for some women-servants, for there was no entertainment that evening. We went into the small room on the left and lit the candles.

It was then about seven o'clock in the evening and quite dark, as the time of year was December. Jenny was restless and excited. She went to the window and looked out. 'The Square is quiet,' she said. 'How long will it remain quiet?'

The servants brought in some supper. Jenny took a

little glass of wine. She then went away and returned in a plain dress with a cloak and hood.

'I must be ready,' she said, 'to set off on my travels—whither? Mother'—she turned to the old lady—'you are a witch. Look into the fire and tell me what you see.'

The old woman filled and drained a glass of Madeira and turned her chair round. She gazed intently into the red coals.

'I see,' she said, 'a crowd of people. I see a Court. I see the condemned cell. . . .' She turned away. 'No, Jenny, I will look no more. 'Twas thus I looked in the fire before thy father was taken. Thus and thus did I see. I will look no longer.'

'Well,' said Doll, 'what will they do next? They know now where you live, Madame Vallance.'

The old woman sat down and sighed heavily. 'The Black Jack!' she murmured. 'We shall never see it again.'

Jenny was quiet and grave. 'We have beaten them,' she said. 'They never suspected that so complete a beating was in store for them. Now comes our turn—my turn rather.'

'Your turn, Jenny?'

'Yes, Will, my turn. Do you suppose they will forgive us? Why, we have given evidence against our own people. All St. Giles's trusted my mother and sister—Could one suspect the Black Jack? Why, because I was a daughter of the house, all St. Giles's trusted me—and we have betrayed them! There will be revenge and that quickly.'

Doll nodded expressively. Her mother groaned.

'What kind of revenge?'

Doll nodded her head again and drew a long breath. Her mother groaned again.

'I do not know, yet. Listen, Will. The people know very well that this case has been got up by myself. I found out, by my mother's assistance, those facts about the trials and floggings and imprisonments: I went into the country and secured the evidence. I brought up the gaolers to testify to the men's identity. I even went to my husband and promised—yes, I swore—that I would put him into the conspiracy as well as the other four if he did not give evidence without saying a word to Probus. And then I bought my mother out.'

'You bought out your mother?'

'Twas as sweet a business, Sir,' the old woman interrupted, 'as you ever saw. A matter of three pounds a day takings and two pounds a day profit.'

'I bought her out,' said Jenny. 'I also compensated her for the contents of her vaults.'

'Ah!' sighed the old woman. 'There were treasures!'

'The Black Jack is shut up. When the people go there this evening'—again Doll nodded—'they will find it closed—and they will wreck the place.'

'And drink up all that's left,' said Doll.

'Let us prevent murder. Jack, you will find it best for your health to get as far as possible out of London. Take my mother and sister to one of the taverns in the Borough. There's a waggon or a caravan starts every morning for some country place or other: never mind where. Go with them, Jack: stay with them for a while till they are settled. Mother, you won't be happy unless you can have a tavern somewhere. If you can find one, Jack will do for you. There you will be safe, I think. St. Giles's doesn't contain any of our people. But in London you will be murdered—you and Doll, too—for sure and certain.'

'For sure and certain,' said Doll grimly.

Jenny gave her mother more money. 'That will carry

you into the country,' she said. 'You can let me know, somehow, where you are. But take care not to let anyone know who would tell the people here. The gipsies are your best friends, not the thieves.'

I asked her if it was really necessary to make all these preparations.

'You don't know these people, Will. I do. The one thing to which they cling is their safety from the law so long as they are among themselves. There will be wild work this evening. As for me, I have under my dress all my money and all my jewels. I am ready for flight.'

'Why, Jenny, you don't think they will attack you here?'

'I do, indeed. There is nothing more likely. Did you observe a woman running along Holborn beside the coach? I know that woman. She is the Captain's girl. Revenge was written on her face—easy to read—revenge—revenge. She stood beside the doorstep when we came in. She marked the house. She has gone back to St. Giles's to tell them where we can be found this evening. But they learned that fact in Court. Oh! They will come presently.'

'Well, Jenny, let us escape while we can.'

'There are many ways of escape,' she said. 'There is no hurry. We can pass over the roof of the next house and so into the garrets of the house beyond. I have proved this way of escape—— Oh! Will, I counted the cost beforehand. Or there is the back door which opens on Hog Lane. We can get out that way. I am sure they will not think of the back door. Or it is easy to climb over the garden wall into the next house: there are plenty of ways. I am not afraid about our escape—if we can keep them out for a few minutes. But, Jack, you had better take my mother and sister away at once.'

'No,' said Jack stoutly. 'Where you are, Madam, there I am.'

'You are a fool, Jack,' she replied with her sweet smile, which made him more foolish still. 'They will murder you if they can.'

'They shan't murder you, then,' the lad replied, clutching his cudgel.

By the time we finished supper and held this discourse it was close upon eight.

'Will,' said Jenny, 'you and Jack had better barricade the door. It is a strong door, but even oak will give way. Take the card-tables and pile them up.'

The card-tables were thin slight things with curved legs, all gilt and lacquer. But the long table was a heavy mahogany thing. We took out some of the pieces by which it was lengthened and closed it up. Then we carried it out to the hall and placed it against the door: the length of the door filled the breadth of the hall and jammed in the boards until it seemed as if it would bear any amount of pressure from without. We piled the smaller tables one above the other behind the large table: if the mob did get in, they would be encumbered for awhile among the legs of so many tables. This was the only attempt we could make at fortifying the house: the lower windows were protected by the iron railings outside.

'Will,' said Jenny, 'we have made the door safe. But Lord! what is to prevent their breaking down the railings and entering by the area? Or why should they not bring a ladder and force their way at the first floor?'

'Would they be so determined?'

'They scent blood. They are like the carrion crow. They mean blood and pillage. The latter they will have. Not the former.'

At this point we heard a low grumbling noise in the distance, which became the roar of many voices.

'They are already at the Black Jack,' said Jenny. 'I should like to see what they are doing. Come with me, Will. It is too dark for anyone to recognise me, and there will be a great crowd. All St. Giles's will be out to see the wreck of the Black Jack.'

She drew her hood over her head, which in a measure hid her face, and taking my hand, she led me through the garden and so out by the back door into Hog Lane. The place, always quiet, was deserted and, besides, was nearly pitch dark, having no lamps in it.

Jenny's house—the Assembly Rooms of Soho Square—stood at the corner of Sutton Street, and with its gardens extended back into Hog Lane. Nearly opposite Sutton Street, a little lower down, the short street called Denmark Street ran from Hog Lane into St. Giles's High Street opposite the Church. The Black Jack stood opposite to the Church.

When we got to Denmark Street we took the north side, because there were fewer people there. Yet the crowd was gathering fast. We stood at the corner of the street at the East and where we could see what was going on and be ready to escape as quickly as possible in case of necessity.

A company of men with whom were a good many women and a few boys were besieging the dark and deserted Black Jack. They were a company apart, acting by themselves without any assistance from the crowd, which looked on approvingly and applauded. They neither asked for, nor would they accept, assistance. If any man from the outside offered to join them, he was roughly ordered back. 'It is their revenge, Will,' said Jenny. 'They will have no one with them to join in

their own business.' Their resolution and the quiet way with which they acted—for the roars and shouting we heard did not proceed from the company of revenge but from the crowd that followed them—struck one with terror as if we were contemplating the irresistible decrees of Fate. They battered at the doors: as no one answered, they broke in the doors: but first with a volley of stones they broke every window in the house.

'Poor mother!' said Jenny. ''Twould break her heart. But she will lose nothing. I bought her out. It is the landlord who will suffer. Now they have found candles: they light up; see, they are going all over the house in search of the landlady.' We saw lights in the rooms one after the other. 'They will not find her: nor her money: nor anything that is valuable. It is all gone, gentlemen: all provided for and stowed away in a safer place. This is not a house where a woman who values her throat should be found, after to-day's work. See—now, they have made up their minds that no one is left in the house. What next? Will they set fire to it?'

No: they did not set fire to the house. They proceeded to break up everything: all the furniture: the beds, chairs and tables, and to throw fragments out of window into the open space below where some of them collected everything and made a bonfire. When the house was emptied they began to bring out the bottles and to haul up the casks out of the cellars: upon this there was a rush of the crowd from the outside: strange as it may appear the company of revenge were going to break the bottles and to set the casks running. But the mob rushed in: there was fighting for a few minutes: someone blew a whistle and the rioters drew apart, and stood together before the house. Then one of them, their leader, spoke.

'This is the revenge of St. Giles's on the landlady of the Black Jack. Drink up all her casks and all her bottles, and be damned to ye!'

The people that rushed upon the casks were like ravenous beasts of prey: you would have thought that they had never had their fill of strong drink before: indeed for such people it is impossible to have their fill of strong drink unless insensibility means satiety. They set the casks running: they made cups of their hands: they drank with their mouths from the taps: they filled empty bottles: they fought for the full bottles: the place was covered with broken glass: their faces were bleeding with cuts from broken bottles: the bonfire lifted its fierce flame hissing and roaring: at the open windows of houses hard-by women looked on, shrieking and applauding: some, within the railings of the Church, looked on as from a place of safety: as the flames lit up their pale faces, they might have been the ghosts of the dead, called out of their quiet graves to see what was going on.

'It is not their intention to burn down the Black Jack,' said Jenny. 'Then there will be a new landlady, and the Thieves' Kitchen will go on again.'

The leader of the Company blew his whistle, and the men fell into some kind of line.

'My turn now,' said Jenny. 'Let us fly, Will. Let us fly back again.'

We ran down Denmark Street into the quiet, dark Hog's Lane before the Company reached the place. We ran through the garden door and locked it. Then we went back to the house. The old woman was half drunk by this time and half asleep. Doll was sitting upright, waiting. Jack stood by the door.

'They are coming,' said Jenny. 'They have sacked the Black Jack, Doll. They would have murdered you had

you been in the house: they have broken all the furniture and made a bonfire of it: and they have brought out all the liquor. The people are drinking it up now—beer and rum and gin—and wine. Well, you have lost nothing, Doll—nothing at all. Now they are coming here.' She rang the bell, and called the servants. There were six of them. 'There is a mob on their way to this house,' she told them. 'They are going to wreck the place and to murder me, if they can. You had better get out of the house as soon as you can. Put together all that you can carry, and go out of the back way. You can go to one of the inns in Holborn for the night: if any of you have the courage to venture through the streets of Soho, you might go to the Horse Guards and call the soldiers to save the house. Now be quick. To-morrow I will pay you your wages.'

The women looked astonished, as well they might. What sort of company was Madame keeping? There was the old woman bemused with drink: there was the young countryman: who were they? What did it mean?

'The mob are coming to-night, Madame?'

'They are coming now. They will be here in a few minutes. If you would escape, go put your things together and fly by the garden door.'

They looked at each other: without a word they retired: and I suppose they got away immediately, because we saw no more of them.

And then we heard a steady tramp of feet along Sutton Street.

'They are here,' said Jenny.

We heard the feet, but there was no shouting. They marched in a silence which was more threatening than any noise. I closed the wooden shutters of the room. It was as well not to show any lights.

'I suppose,' said Doll, 'that you will give us time to escape. Otherwise we shall all four have our throats cut, and perhaps this gentleman too, for whom you've taken all this trouble—and him with a wife of his own. He'd better go back to her.'

'Yes, Doll,' Jenny replied meekly, without replying to the suggestion. 'You shall have time to escape.'

They drew up, apparently, in very good order before the house, without any shouting, because most of the crowd that had followed them to the Black Jack were still on the spot drinking what they could get in the general scramble. There were some, however, who came with them and hung outside and behind the company of revenge, who began to assemble and to shout 'Huzzah' after the way of the Londoners. But I believe they knew not what was intended save that it was revenge of some kind: there would most certainly be the breaking of windows and the smashing of doors: there would be the pleasant spectacle of revenge with more bonfires of broken furniture: perhaps more casks and bottles of strong drink: in all probability women would be turned out into the street with every kind of insult and ill-usage, as had happened, indeed, only a week before in the Strand when a company of sailors wrecked a house and turned the women out of doors with blows and curses.

First they knocked loudly at the door, shouting for the door to be opened or it would be the worse for everybody inside. Then they pushed the door, which yielded not.

'They will not force the door easily,' said Jenny. 'Who will run downstairs and see that the area door is secure?'

I volunteered for this duty. The kitchen windows were provided with strong iron bars which would keep the people off for a time: the area door was strong and was barred within: for further precaution I locked and barred

the kitchen door and a strong door at the head of the staircase: we should thus gain time.

Crash—smash—crash! Were you ever in a house while the mob outside were breaking the windows? Perhaps not. 'Tis like a field of battle with the rattle of musquetry. At one moment half the windows in the house were broken: at the next moment the other half went: and still crash—crash—the stones flew into the windows, tearing out what little glass remained.

Then there was silence again.

'Our time is nearly up,' said Jenny. 'Doll, wake up mother. Tie her hat under her chin, wrap her handkerchief round her neck—so. What will they do next? Jack, are you afraid to reconnoitre? Go up to the first floor, and look out of window.'

I went with him. The stones were still flying thickly through the windows. We made our way along the wall till we came to the window. Then we went on hands and knees and crept to the window. I wrapped one hand in a curtain and held it before my face while I looked out.

They were lighting torches and conferring together. By the torchlight I could make out their faces. They were of the type which I had had a recent opportunity of studying in Newgate: the type which means both the hunter and the hunted. It is a cruel and hard type: a relentless type: the faces all had the same expression—it meant 'Revenge.' 'We have been betrayed,' said the faces, 'by our friends, by the very people we trusted: we will have revenge. As we have sacked the Black Jack, so we will sack the Assembly Rooms. As we would have killed the landlady of the Black Jack: so we will kill her daughter, the Orange Girl, if we find her.' That is what the faces seemed to say.

They were conferring what to do next. One of them, I

could see, advocated breaking down the iron railings: but they had no instruments: another wanted to use a battering-ram against the front door: but they had no battering-ram: a third proposed a ladder and entering by the first floor windows. But they had no ladder.

While they were thus debating a man came into the Square who brought a ladder for them. There was no further hesitation. 'Come, Jack,' I said. 'There is no time to be lost: we must get away as quickly as possible.'

'You go on,' said Jack, 'I will follow.'

He waited. The ladder was raised to the window at which he watched. A fellow ran up quickly. Jack sprang to his feet, threw up the sash and hurled him headlong off the ladder. The poor wretch fell on the spikes. He groaned, but only once. He was killed. There was silence for a moment. Then there arose a mighty scream—I say it was like the screaming of a woman. The mob had tasted blood. It was their own—but it was blood. They yelled and roared. Some of them ran to hold the ladder while a dozen men ran up. Jack prudently retired, but locked the door behind him.

'I believe I have killed him,' he said quickly. 'The one who ran up the ladder. I think he fell on the spikes.'

'Come,' said Jenny. 'We must go at once if we mean to go at all. Wake up mother again, Doll. Farewell o my greatness. Will, I grudge not any cost—remember—whatever it is. Take me with you, to your own home for awhile, till I am able to look round again. These devils! they are overhead, I hear them falling over the furniture. Pray that they break their shins. Come, everybody.'

She blew out the candles and led the way. The old woman, half awake, was led out by Jack and Doll. I followed last. As we passed out into the garden, we

'WILL, I GRUDGE NOT ANY COST.'

could hear the cursing of the fellows overhead and the smashing of the door which Jack had locked.

In Sutton Street, over the garden wall, everything seemed quiet: that is, there were no footsteps as of a crowd. Yet in the Square the crowd roared and yelled, and from St. Giles's was still heard the clamour of the people fighting over the drink. We looked out of the garden door cautiously. No one was in Hog Lane, which was as deserted as a city in the Desert. We closed the door and turned to the right, and so making our way by streets which I knew well, either by day or by night, we got to St. Martin's Lane and then to Charing Cross, where we found a hackney coach.

'Jenny,' I said in the coach, taking her hand. 'The evening spoils the day. All this you have suffered for my sake. What can I say? What can I feel?'

'Oh! Will, what are a few sticks of furniture and curtains compared to your safety and to Alice's happiness? I care not a straw. I am ruined, it is true; but—for the first time in my life, I am thankful for it—I am a married woman. My debts will all be transferred to Matthew. Will! Think of it! The first effect of the victory will be to make Matthew a bankrupt at once. After what he owned in Court, after he receives the news of my debts: there can be no delay. Henceforth, my dear Will, you will be safe from Mr. Probus.'

I was, indeed, to be safe from him, but in a way which she could not expect.

'Meantime,' she added, with a sigh, 'they have not done with me, yet.'

'Why, what further harm can they do you?'

'I know not. You asked the same question before. There is no end to the ways of a revengeful spirit. They will murder me, perhaps: or they will contrive some other way.'

'Then go out of their reach.'

'The only place of safety for me is with my own folks. I should be safe in a gipsy camp. They have their camps everywhere, but I do not want to live with them. No, Will. I shall remain. After all, the revenge of people like these soon passes away. They will wreck my house to-night. That very likely will seem to them enough. I should have thought so, but for the things that mother saw in the coals. She is a witch, indeed. I say, mother, you are a proper witch.' But the good lady was fast asleep.

We left her with her daughter Doll and the young fellow they called Jack, at the White Hart Inn. It appeared that a waggon was going on in the morning to Horsham in Sussex. They might as well stay at Horsham for a time as anywhere else. There was very little fear that the St. Giles's company of revenge would make any further inquiries about them. So they left us and I saw the pair no more—and cannot tell you what became of them in the end. As for the young fellow, you will hear more about him. The hackney coach took us to our cottage on the Bank, where, after so many emotions and surprises, I, for one, slept well.

Let us return to the house in the Square. The rioters finding no one within, quickly pulled away the barricade of the front door and threw it open. Then the work of wrecking the place began. When you remember that supper was sometimes provided for two thousand people, you will understand the prodigious quantity of plates, dishes, knives, forks, tables, benches, and things that were stored in the pantries and kitchens. You have heard of the hangings, the curtains, the candelabra, the sconces, the musical instruments, the plants, the vases, the paintings, the coloured lamps, the card-tables, the candlesticks, the

stores of candles—in a word the immense collection of all kinds necessary for carrying on the entertainments. It is true that the suppers were cooked at a tavern and sent in, cold; but they had to be served in dishes and provided with plates. There was no wine to speak of in the house, because the wine was sent in for the night from the tavern which supplied it. Everything in the house was broken. The company of revenge did its work thoroughly. Everything was broken: everything was thrown out of the windows: the centre of the Square was made the site of a huge bonfire which, I believe, must be remembered yet: all the furniture was piled up on this bonfire: the flames ascended to the skies: that of the Black Jack was a mere boys' bonfire compared to this, while the piles of broken glass and china rendered walking in the Square dangerous for many a day to come.

You have heard that Jenny recommended her women-servants to call out the soldiers. One of them dared to run through the dark streets to the Horse Guards. Half an hour, however, elapsed before the soldiers could be turned out. At last they started with muskets loaded and bayonets fixed: when they arrived, the work was nearly finished: it would have been better for poor Jenny had it been completely finished, as you will presently discover: the furniture was all broken and, with the hangings, curtains and carpets, was burning on the bonfire. The soldiers drew up before the door: the mob began throwing stones: the soldiers fired into them. Four or five fell—of whom two were killed on the spot: the rest were wounded. The mob soon ran away. Some of the soldiers proceeded to search the house: they found a dozen or twenty fellows engaged in smashing the mirrors and the candelabra in the dancing-hall: they secured them: and then, the mob all gone, and the bonfire dying away, they left a guard of

four or five and marched back with their prisoners and the wounded men. In the morning the soldiers fastened up the broken door somehow and left the empty house. Alas! If only the mob had been able to fire the house and to burn down and gut the place from cellar to garret.

This was the first act of revenge on the part of St. Giles. There was to be another and a more deadly act.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED CHARGE.

The joy of the acquittal and the release was certainly dashed by the wild revenge of the mob in the evening. The wreck of the great house with all its costly fittings and decorations could be nothing short of ruin to poor Jenny. Still it was with heartfelt gratitude that I returned to my own roof with character unblemished. Alice had a little feast prepared, not so joyful as it might have been, though Jenny made a brave attempt to be cheerful. Tom was with us: the punch-bowl was filled: the glasses went round: Tom played and sang—nobody could sing more movingly than he when he was in that vein; that is, when he sat with a cheerful company round the steaming punch-bowl.

More revenge, however, was to follow. Next morning, about eight or nine of the clock, Jenny came out with me to walk upon the Bank. For the time of year the weather was fine, the sun, still warm, though it was now low down, and had a wintry aspect, shone upon the river: the wind tossed up the water in little waves; the boats rocked; the swans rolled about and threatened to capsize.

Jenny carried the boy, who laughed and played with

her hair and impudently planted his fingers upon her cheek.

'Will,' she said, 'I must now contrive some other means of existence. The Assembly Rooms of Soho Square are wrecked and destroyed. That is certain. They are very likely burned down as well. All my furniture, all my property is destroyed. Of that I am quite certain. The villains would make short work once inside. Well, I can never recover credit enough to refit them. Besides, the mob might break in again, though I do not think they would. I am sorry for my creditors. They will be much more injured than I myself,' she laughed.

'Who are your creditors, Jenny?'

'Upholsterers, painters, furniture-makers, cooks, wine-merchants, bakers, grocers, drapers—half London, Will. There was never anybody a greater benefactor to trade. They let me go on, because you see, they thought the profits of the winter season would clear them. Poor dear confiding people!'

'Well, but Jenny, since they trusted you before, will they not trust you again?'

'They cannot, possibly. Consider what it would take to refit that great place. By this time all the mirrors and the paintings have been destroyed. Most likely the house is burned down as well; unless the soldiers came in time, which I doubt. They generally march up when the mischief is done.' So she began to toss and to dandle the boy, singing to it. 'Will,' she said, 'the happiest lot for a woman is to live retired and bring up her brats. If Matthew had been what he promised and taken me away from London and into the country!'

'Do you know how much you owe?'

'I heard, some time ago, that it was over £30,000. Masquerades, I fear, cannot be made to pay. They say I

give them too much wine and too good. As for giving them too much, that is impossible. The men would drink, every night, a three-decker full; their throats are like the vasty deep.'

'But—is it possible? £30,000? Jenny, you can never pay that enormous sum.'

'My dear Will, I never thought I should be able to pay it. Unfortunately while it is unpaid the good people are not likely to give me any more money. No, Will, that chapter is finished. Exit Madame Vallance. Who comes next?'

'But there are the creditors to consider.' I began to have fears of a Debtors' Prison for Jenny.

'Oh! The creditors? The creditors, my dear Will, will be handed over to Matthew. You are a good musician but an indifferent lawyer. Matthew—Matthew—is responsible for his wife's liabilities. This is the only point which reconciles me to marriage with such a man. I am provided with a person who must take over all my debts. Dear Matthew! Kind Matthew! That worthy man, that incomparable husband will now, for the first time, understand the full felicities of the married state.'

'But Matthew can never pay this enormous sum of money.'

'I do not suppose he can. Then he will retreat to the Prison where he put you, and, as long as he lives, will have opportunity of blessing first the day when he married a wife, and next the day when he made it impossible for her to live with him. If I can no longer carry on my Assembly Rooms, what remains?'

'There is always the stage. Your friends desire nothing so much as your return to Drury Lane.'

'Yes, the stage. I might return to Drury Lane. But, Will, those good people who sacked the Black Jack and

wrecked the house in the Square yesterday, they were my friends of old; some of them, I believe, are my cousins: they formerly came to applaud. Do you think they would come to applaud after what has happened? Not so. They would come with baskets full of rotten apples and addled eggs: they would salute me with those missiles; there would be frantic cursings and hissings; they would drive me off the stage with every brutal insult that their filthy minds could invent. Oh! I know my own people—my cousins. I know them.'

'They will forget you, Jenny.'

'Yes, if I keep quiet. If I put myself forward the old rancour will be revived. Who betrayed her old friends? Who sent the Bishop and the Captain to Newgate? Who got them put in pillory—where they will most certainly have to stand? Who caused all the addled eggs in London to fly in their innocent faces? I tell you, Will, I know my people. Are they not my people? And have I not betrayed them? You lovely boy—tell your Dada that Jenny will never repent or regret what she did for his sake: she would do it again, she would—she would—she would.'

'Oh! Jenny, you cut me to the heart. What can I do for you?'

'You can look happy again: and you can get the Newgate paleness out of your cheeks—that is what you can do, Will.'

At this point of our discourse I observed, without paying any attention to them, a little company of two men and a woman, walking across the Marsh in the direction of the Palace or the Church or perhaps the cottages. I looked at them without suspicion. Otherwise it would have been easy for Jenny to have jumped into a boat and to have escaped—for a time at least. But at this juncture we

were singularly unfortunate. The house in Soho Square had not been burned; otherwise there would have been no further trouble. But you shall hear. I went back to the question of the liabilities. How could anyone be easy who owed £30,000?

'Since there is no help, Jenny, for the creditors, and since you are not responsible, why then, Jenny, you shall live with us, and it will be our pride and happiness to work for you.'

She laughed. No: that would not do either.

Meantime the people I had seen crossing the Marsh were drawing nearer. I now observed that the woman with the two men was none other than the girl I had seen at the Black Jack, sitting on the Captain's knee.

'Jenny,' I said, 'quick! Here comes a woman who owes you no goodwill. Are you afraid of her? If so, let us take boat and escape across the river.'

'Is it one of the St. Giles's company? No, Will, I am not afraid of the woman, and you, I am sure, are not afraid of the men.'

They were within fifty feet of us. The woman broke away from the men and ran towards us. 'Here she is!' she cried. 'This is the woman. Make her prisoner. Quick! She will run away. I told you she would be here. Oh! Make her prisoner. Quick! Put on the handcuffs. Tie her hand and foot—she's a devil—bring out the chains. She is desperate. She will claw some of you with her nails. Once she bit off a man's ear. That was when she was an orange girl. Make her prisoner, good gentlemen, as quick as you can. Take care of her. She'll tear your eyes out for you.'

Jenny flushed scarlet and stood still. But she caught my hand. 'Don't leave me, Will,' she murmured. Leave her? But a terrible sinking of the heart warned me that

something horrible and dreadful was falling upon us. What was it? 'I have felt it coming,' said Jenny. 'Come with me, whatever they do.'

The woman was within six feet of us, standing on the Bank. A wild figure she was, bareheaded save for her hair, which streamed out in the fresh breeze: she wore a black leather corset and a frock of some thick stuff with a woollen shawl or kerchief round her neck. Her red arms were bare to the elbow; she had a black eye and a disfiguring scratch across her cheek. Her bosom heaved; her lips trembled; her eyes were bright; her cheeks were flaming. I knew her now! She was the girl I had seen sitting on the Captain's knee. And I understood. This was more revenge.

The two men then approached. I knew them, too, alas! I had good reason to know them. They were officers of Bow Street Court.

'By your leave, Madame,' said one, 'I have an order to arrest the body of Madame Vallance, otherwise called Jenny Wilmot, otherwise Mrs. Matthew Halliday.' He produced his emblem of office, the short wand with a brass crown upon it.

'I am the person, Sir. I suppose you have some reason —some charge—against me?'

'Receiving stolen goods, knowing the same to have been stolen.'

'Oh!' she caught at my arm. 'I had forgotten that danger—Will, do not leave me—not yet—not yet.' Then she recovered her self-possession. 'Well, gentlemen, I am your prisoner. This gentleman, my friend and cousin, may, I suppose, come with me?' Alice came to the door and looked out astonished to see two officers. 'Take your child, Alice,' said Jenny, 'I must go with these gentlemen. Not content with destroying my property, they are now

trying to destroy my character. Will goes with me to see what it means. He will report to you later on!'

'Oh! your character!' said the woman. 'A pretty character you've got! How long since you had a character at all, I should like to know? Destroy your character? I will destroy your life—your life—your life—vile impudent drab—I shall take your life. You shall learn what it means to turn against your friends.'

'Come,' said one of the men, 'you've shown us where she was. No more jaw. Now leave us. Go. You have had your revenge.'

'Not yet—not till I see her in the cart. That is the only revenge that will satisfy me.'

Jenny looked at her with a kind of pity. 'Poor soul!' she said gently. 'Do you think the man is worth all this revenge? Do you think he cares for you? Do you think you will care about him after a day or two? What do you think you will get by all the revenge possible? More of his love and fidelity? Who gave you that black eye? Will you make him any happier in his prison—will you make him any fonder?'

'Oh!' the woman gasped and caught her breath. 'Revenge? If I can find your mother and your sister I will kill them both with a pair of scissors.' She improved this prophecy by a few decorative adjectives. 'As for you, this will teach you to turn against your own folk—the poor rogues—you belong to us: and you turn against us. To save a man that belongs to other folk. Ha! The rope is round your neck already! Ha! I see you swinging. Ho!' She stopped and gasped again, being overcome with the emotion of satisfied revenge.

'Perhaps,' I said weakly, 'this good woman would take a guinea and go away quietly?'

'No! No!' she replied, 'not if you stuffed my pockets

full of guineas. You've put my man in prison. They say he'll stand in pillory and p'r'aps be killed—the properest man in St. Giles's. They kill them sometimes in the pillory,' she shuddered, 'but p'r'aps they'll let him off easy. As for you, my fine Madame—you that look so haughty—you, the orange girl—you'll be hanged—you'll be hanged!' She screamed these words, dancing about and cracking her fingers like a madwoman. Never before had I seen a woman so entirely possessed by the fury of love's bereavement. Do not imagine that I have set down her actual words—that I could not do—nor the half of what she said. And all for such a lover! for a footpad and highway robber; for a brute who beat her, kicked her, and knocked her down; a low, dirty villain, who made her fetch and carry and work for him; who had no tenderness, or any good thing in him at all. Yet he was her man; and she loved him; and she would be revenged for him. This woman, I say, was like a tigress bereft of her cubs. Had it not been for the constable who stood between and for myself who stood beside, she would have flown at poor Jenny with nail and claw and, indeed, any other weapon which Nature had given to woman. I saw two women fighting once for a man: 'twas in the King's Bench Prison; they were pulled apart after one had been disfigured for life by the other's teeth. This woman wanted only permission to rush in and do likewise. But the constable kept her back with his strong arm.

'Come,' he said, 'enough said. What's the use of crying and shrieking? You'll all be hanged in good time—all be hanged. What else are you fit for? And a blessed thing it is for you that you will be hanged. That's what I say. If you only knew it. Madame,' he said very respectfully, 'I must ask leave to take you before his worship.' He held out his hand: the hand of Law in all her branches

from Counsel to thief-taker is always held out. I gave him half a guinea.

The woman was still standing beside us, shaking and trembling under the agitation of the late storm. 'Here you,' said the officer, 'we've had enough of your filthy tongue. Get off with you. Go, I say.' He stepped forward with a menacing gesture. Among these women a blow generally follows a word. She turned and walked away. I followed her with my eyes. Her shoulders still heaved; her fingers worked: from time to time she turned and shook her fist: and though I could not hear I am certain she was talking to herself.

'Where are we going?' Jenny asked humbly.

'To Sir John Fielding's, Bow Street, Madame. Lord! what signifies what a madwoman like that says? She's lost her man and she's off her head.'

'How are we to get there?'

'Well, Madame, there is no coach to be got this side the High Street. If I may make so bold there's the boats at the Horseferry. We can drop down the river more quickly than over London Bridge.'

Jenny made no remark. She sat in the boat with bent head, her cheeks still flaming.

'I am thinking, Will. Don't speak to me just at present.'

The boat carried us swiftly down the river.

'I am thinking,' she repeated, 'what is best to do. Will, I had quite forgotten the things.' I could not understand a word of what she said. 'I know now what I have to do. It's a hard thing to do, but it's the best.'

She explained no more, and we presently arrived at the Savoy Stairs and took a coach to Bow Street Police Court. It was only six weeks since I was there last, but on what a different errand!

The blind magistrate took our case and called for the evidence.

First, the woman who had delivered Jenny into the hands of the law deposed that she was a respectable milliner by trade; that she was accidentally in the neighbourhood of the Black Jack about midnight three nights before, when she became aware of something which excited her curiosity and interest. The landlady of the tavern and her daughter Doll were carrying between them a box full of something or other. She followed them, herself unseen. They walked down Denmark Street into Hog's Lane, and carried their box into a garden, the door of which was open: for greater certainty of knowing the place again she marked the door in the corner with a cross. Then the two women came out and returned to the Black Jack. All night long they were carrying things from the tavern to the garden gate; sometimes in boxes, sometimes in their arms; there were silk mantles and satin frocks and embroidered petticoats, very fine. That work kept them all night. Now, knowing the old woman to be a notorious fence, she was certain that these were stolen goods, and that they were removing them for safety to this house probably unknown to the master and the mistress; that in the morning when it was light she went back to the place and found that the garden-door was the back-door of the premises known as the Soho Square Assembly Rooms, kept by a Madame Vallance.'

'Well? what then?' asked Sir John.

'Your worship, the next day was the trial of that gentleman there for robbing the Bishop and the Captain. I was in the Old Bailey, sir, and the gentleman would have been brought in guilty and hanged, as many a better man than he has suffered it without a whisper or a snivel—but this woman here—this Madame Vallance, who is nothing

in the world but Jenny Wilmot the actress—who was an Orange Girl at Drury Lane once—and is the daughter of the old woman that keeps the Black Jack.'

'The Black Jack!' said Sir John. 'The mob wrecked that house last night.'

'And the other house too. They would have set it on fire, your Honour,' said the girl, 'but the soldiers came up and stopped them. More's the pity.'

'Have a care, woman,' said the magistrate, 'or I shall commit you for taking part in the riot. Go on with your evidence if you have any more.'

She gave her evidence in a quick impetuous manner. It was like a cataract of angry burning words.

'It was in the garret that I found the things; I knew them at once. I'd been down in Mother Wilmot's cellars. Oh! I knew them at once. Jenny's got the stolen goods, I said. And so she had. So she had, your Honour, and oh! let her deny it—let her deny it—if she can.'

'You found property in the garret which you identified as stolen. Pray how did you know that fact?'

'Because it came from Mother Wilmot's cellars.'

'That does not prove it to be stolen.'

'Well, Sir, I happened to know some respectable people who had been robbed of late, and I made bold to tell them of it; and they found their own things, and here the worthy respectable gentlemen are to testify.'

'I will hear them presently.' Then Sir John began to ask the woman a few questions which mightily disconcerted her. If, he asked, she was a respectable milliner, where did she work? If she was a respectable woman, what was she doing in front of St. Giles's Church at midnight? If she were a respectable woman, how did she come to know the landlady of the Black Jack and her daughter? How was it she found herself in the garrets at all? At what

time was she in the garrets? How did she come to know the people who had lost property of late? In a word, he made the woman confess who she was and what she was. And he then, to her confusion and amazement, committed her for trial for taking part in the riots. So she was put aside, and presently consigned to Newgate with other rioters taken in the fact. In the end she was imprisoned and whipped. Still her evidence proved the deposit of goods in the garrets. The worthy gentlemen to whom she referred were three or four respectable tradesmen of Holborn. They deposed, one after the other, how they had suffered of late much from depredations which prevented them from exposing their goods at their doors; that this woman had called to warn them of certain things found by the rioters in the garrets of the Soho Square Assembly Rooms; that they went to see the things by permission of the guard of soldiers: that they found certain things of their own, which they identified by private marks upon them.

The evidence was concluded. 'Madame,' the magistrate said, 'you have heard the evidence. What have you to say? If you desire to call evidence for the defence I will remand the case. You can produce, perhaps, your mother and sister, though I confess they are not likely to appear.'

'They got away yesterday, to avoid the fury of the mob, Sir. This woman is angry because I have proved her lover to be guilty of perjury.'

'That is evident. On the other hand, your house contained the stolen goods; your mother was seen taking them into the house. The circumstances are such as to make it evident that your mother desired a place of safety. It is proper to show that you were not an accomplice of the removal and the reception in your house.'

'I submit, Sir, that I can only prove this by calling my

mother as witness, and, Sir, you have yourself acknowledged that she is not likely to appear.'

'Then, Madame, I can only ask you for anything you may say in defence.'

'Sir, I shall say nothing.'

This reply amazed me beyond anything. I expected her to deny indignantly any knowledge of the matter, and to declare that the things had been brought into the house without her knowledge. She would say nothing. Then Sir John committed her for trial. I placed her in a coach with such heaviness of heart as you may imagine and we drove to Newgate. Jenny was well remembered by the turnkeys, to whom she had been generous and even profuse, in my case. Turnkeys are never astonished, but the appearance of Madame was perhaps an exception to this general rule. However, on payment of certain guineas she was placed, alone, in the best cell that the woman's side could boast.

'Jenny!' I cried when we were alone. 'For God's sake what does it mean? Why did you not deny knowledge of the whole business? What have you to do with stolen goods? Even supposing that your mother took them there, what has that got to do with you?'

'I shall tell the whole truth to you, Will, and only to you. But you may tell Alice. From you I will keep no secrets.'

'Oh! Jenny, it is for me—for me—that you have fallen into all this trouble. What shall I do? What shall I do?' I looked round the mean, bare, and ugly walls of the cell. 'Twas a poor exchange from the private room in the Square. And all for me!

'What did your boy tell you this morning, Will? That Jenny never regrets—never repents—what she has done for you. She would do it all over again—over again—a

hundred thousand times over again.' She buried her face in her hands for a moment. 'Twas not in woman's nature to restrain the tears. Then she sprang to her feet. 'What? you think I am going to cry because the woman has done this? At least she is coming to Newgate as well. Now, Will. I must tell you the truth. It was most important to get the evidence of my mother and of Doll. They connected Probus with the conspiracy. They helped to identify the two principal witnesses. Well, I had to buy their evidence. They made me pay a pretty price for it. As for Doll, you wouldn't believe what a grasping creature she is. That comes of keeping the slate. I had to compensate them for the loss of their daily takings at the Black Jack. I paid them for their stock of liquors—we saw the mob drinking it up last night: I paid them for their furniture and their clothes. I gave them money to get out of London with, and to keep them until they can get another tavern; they got money from me on one pretence or the other till I thought they were resolved on taking all I had. And when I had paid for everything and thought they were settled and done with there arose the question of the stolen goods. And I really thought the whole business was ruined and undone.'

'What question?'

'Why, my parent, Will, had got under the old house a spacious stone vault quite dry, built up with arches and paved with stone; there isn't a finer store-room in all London: it belonged once to some people—I don't know—religious people who liked shutting themselves up in the dark. I suppose that mother couldn't bear waste or the throwing away of good opportunities, for she turned the vault into a cellar for stolen goods; she bought the goods; she stored them down below; she sold them to people who carried them about the country. Everybody knew it; and

she was pretty safe because she had a good name for the prices she gave, and even Merridew had to let her alone. Well, what was to be done with the things in the vault? There was enough to hang them both a hundred times. They took me down to see them. I never suspected there was anything like the quantity of things. Plain silver melted down; gold melted down; precious stones picked out of rings; and snuff-boxes; patch boxes; rolls of silk; boxes of gloves; handkerchiefs; frocks and gowns and embroidered petticoats and mantles; ribbons of all kinds; the place was like a wonderful shop. Time was pressing. It was impossible for mother to sell everything at once; things have to be taken into the country and sold cautiously to the Squire's lady, who knows very well what she is buying, just as her husband knows that he is buying smuggled brandy.'

'So you bought the things?'

'There was nothing else to do. Mother tied up the jewels in her handkerchief; Doll took the melted gold and silver; and they undertook to carry all the rest of the things across to the garden door in Hog Lane; the door by which we escaped yesterday; and to store them in my cellars and garrets. This, I suppose, they did. I paid for the things. They are mine, Will.'

'Oh!' I groaned.

'Yes, they are mine. This comes of being born in St. Giles's and belonging to the Black Jack. Well, I clean forgot all about the things. Well now; this is the point. If I deny knowledge of them they will send out a hue and cry for mother. She will certainly be found and brought up on the charge. And she is not the sort to suffer in silence. I know my people, Will: she and Doll will let it be known that I bought the things, so that we may all thus stand in the Dock together. And I assure

you, Will, I would much rather stand in the Dock alone. I shall have a better chance.'

'Yes—but——'

'If I take the whole business on myself they won't drag in mother. They will let her alone and she will keep quiet for her own sake. Besides, seeing what this woman has got by her evidence I don't think the others will be eager to give their evidence. Now, Will, you know the exact truth. And—and—this is what one expects if you belong to the Black Jack.'

'But—Jenny—think—think.'

'I know what you would say, dear lad. They will hang me. It is a most ungraceful way of going out of the world. One would prefer a feather bed with dignity. But indeed; have no fears, Will. They will do nothing of the kind. If Jenny Wilmot made any friends at Drury Lane now is the time to prove them. But I must think what to do.'

She sat down to the table. There were writing materials upon it. She took quill in hand. Then she turned to me with her pretty smile. 'Oh! Will—what a disaster it was that the soldiers came up before the mob had set fire to the house! What a disaster! If the house was burned the things in the garrets would have been burned as well and all the stolen goods would have been destroyed and no trace left. What a disaster!' She laughed. 'What might have been called my good fortune has turned out the greatest misfortune that could have happened to me.

'I must think,' she said. 'I must be alone and think out the whole situation. It all depends on what should be told and what should be concealed. That, I take it, is the history of everything. Some parts we hide and some we tell. I must think.'

I did not disturb her. She leaned her head upon her hand and was silent for awhile.

'Will,' she said, 'of all my friends there are but two on whom I can rely with any hope of help—only two. Yet they told me I had troops of friends. You have heard me speak of a certain noble lord who made love to me. He made love so seriously that he was ready to marry me. I refused him, as a reward. Besides his sister came and wept—I told you the story. I cannot bear to see even a woman weep. Well, Will, this man is, I am quite sure, a loyal and faithful gentleman, the only one of all my lovers whom I could respect. I am going to write to him. He promised me, upon his honour, to come to my assistance if ever I wanted any help of any kind. I am going to remind him of that promise. The next friend is the Manager of Drury. He will help me if he can, though he did not propose to marry me. I will write to him as well. And I must write to my attorney, who is also a friend of yours. Now, Will, I want you to take by your own hand a letter to his lordship. Go to his town house in Curzon Street and ask the people to deliver the letter instantly. The other two letters you can send by messenger. And, Will, one more thing. I believe you ought to warn Matthew what to expect. Since he is going to be bankrupt on his own account it will not hurt him very much to be bankrupt on mine as well. Now wait a little, while I write the letters.'

CHAPTER XV.

THE FILIAL MARTYR.

I HASTENED on my errand, taking a boat to Westminster, whence it is a short walk across the Parks to Curzon Street, where my Lord Brockenhurst had his town house. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon: I found

carriages and chaises waiting outside the open door, and the hall within filled with servants in livery lolling about and exchanging insolent remarks upon the people who crowded up the stairs. I am little versed in the customs of the Great, but I confess that the continual presence of these insolent and hulking varlets in the house and in all the rooms would be to me a burden intolerable. What says Doctor Johnson?

> 'The pride of awful state,
> The golden Canopy, the glitt'ring plate,
> The regal palace, the luxurious board,
> The liveried army and the menial lord . . .'

I believe he meant the lords who were obsequious to the Cardinal: we may read it, to suit those times, the impudent menials who lord it over their Master's house.

I thought of those lines as I waited, neglected, in the Hall among the lacqueys. Fortunately I was reminded of other lines by the same great author.

> 'Where won by bribes, by flatteries implored,
> The groom retails the favours of his Lord.'

I turned to one of them whose shoulder knots and his rod of office proclaimed him one in authority.

'Sir,' I said, 'I am the bearer of a letter for his Lordship.'

'Wait, friend, wait. His Lordship will receive presently.'

'Sir. It is an important letter. It is from a lady. I assure you that his Lordship would be much vexed not to receive it.'

'Give it to me, then.'

'Sir. By your leave. It is very important. Can you contrive to put it into his Lordship's hand immediately?'

He looked at me with an air of surprise, and made no reply.

'Pardon me, Sir,' I said, taking out my purse, i were two guineas—all I had in the world—'I fc add that I rely on your good offices,' with that I a guinea into his hand.

'Ay—' he said. 'Now you talk sense. Well, may trust me. His Lordship shall have the lette an hour, as soon as his company begins to go.'

With this assurance I was fain to be content came away hoping that the fellow would keep h This, happily, he did.

It was too late at that hour to seek out Matthe counting-house. Besides, I confess that I felt pit poor wretch, thus hastening to destruction. His look at the trial showed the miseries he was sufferi gave his evidence, as you have heard, on the thr otherwise he would be charged with the other four w spiracy: and now a misfortune almost as bad was to f him. To go to him would have the appearance of over these misfortunes. Yet it was necessary to te

I went home sadly. That Jenny should suffer t and destruction of her house in Soho Square, wa that she should, also, which was much worse, be on a capital charge and committed to Newgate: should have nothing to say or to plead in defe revenge for the part she had played in proving r cence: these things, I say, were difficult to unc Why should she not plead 'Not Guilty,' and le the prosecution to prove that she was the owne property or that she knew it was in her house would believe the word of the revengeful fury w to seeing the things taken to the house by the ol and her daughter? Would not a clever counsel r contradict herself? and confess, somehow, that sh had laid the things there by way of a trap?

So I argued, blind, in my anxiety.

'Will,' said Alice, 'you would meet misfortune by falsehood. Fie! You would lay a trap set by a clever talker to catch this miserable ignorant woman. Fie!'

'What then?' I cried. 'Ignorant or not, she is a mischievous and a revengeful woman. My dear, I would save Jenny at any cost.'

'I think Jenny is right, Will. She will meet the charge by simply pleading "Guilty" to whatever they can prove against her: namely, having the things in her house, knowing that they were stolen. I think it is her wisest course. No questions will be asked: no one will believe that a woman in her position could actually be guilty of receiving stolen goods so worthless: it will be understood by everybody that she is screening someone—some close relation—even at the risk of her own life.'

I replied by a groan of dissent.

'Jenny is not an actress for nothing. She ought not to have bought the things at all: or she ought to have destroyed them: this I suppose she would have done, but she forgot: she was wholly occupied in saving you. We must remember that with gratitude unspeakable, Will.'

'Yes, wife, God knows I do.'

'The world has been told over and over again that poor Jenny was once an Orange Girl: do people ever expect Orange Girls to come of respectable parents? To take guilt upon yourself—in order to screen your mother—will appear to the world as a noble and generous act. It would have taken you and me, Will, a month to discover the best way out of the trouble. But Jenny saw her way at once.'

In the end Alice proved to be right. Jenny chose the very best thing possible, as you shall see.

In the morning I began by making my way to the old

familiar place, the Counting House and Wharf close to All Hallows the Great. The Wharf was quite empty and desolate: the cranes were there, but there were no lighters: the casks and bales that formerly encumbered the place were gone: in the outer counting house there were no clerks except Ramage. But the place was filled with lawyers' clerks, attorneys, creditors, and their representatives. The talk was loud and angry: all were talking together: all were threatening terrible things unless their claims were paid in full.

Ramage held up his hands when he saw me and shook his head.

'Will my cousin see me, Ramage?' I asked. 'Tell him I have something of the greatest importance to say to him.'

'It is all over, Mr. William,' he whispered. 'The blow has fallen. After the things which came out in the Old Bailey there was no hope. It was all over the City at once and on Change in the afternoon. You will find him within. I fear you will find that he has been drinking. Go in, Sir, you must not pay any heed to what he says. He has been strange and unlike himself for a long time. No wonder with all these troubles.' Thus did the faithful servant stand up for the credit of an unworthy master. 'Go in, Sir. He will insult you. But don't mind what he says.'

I went in. Matthew was evidently half drunk. He had a bottle of brandy before him, and he was drinking fast and furiously.

'Gaol-bird!' he cried, banging his fist on the table and talking thickly. 'Newgate-bird—what do you want? Money? You all want money. You may go away then. I haven't got any money. All the money's gone. All the money's lost.' So he went on repeating his words, and

maundering and forgetting one moment what he had said just before.

'Matthew,' I said, 'I have not come to ask for money or for anything. I have brought you news.'

'What news? There is no news but bad news. Perhaps somebody has murdered Probus. Why don't you murder Probus—murder—murder Probus?' I suffered him to go on in his foolish way without reply. 'Do you know, Will,' he lay back in his chair and plunged his hands in his pockets, 'there is nobody I should like to see murdered so much as Probus—Ezekiel Probus, excepting yourself. If I could see both of you hanging side by side, I should be happy; but if I could see you both murdered with a bludgeon I could go—I could go—I could go to the King's Bench cheerfully—cheerfully.'

It was no use prolonging the interview. I told him, briefly, why I had come.

'Your wife,' I said, 'has had her house sacked and the whole of her property destroyed by the mob.'

'I am glad of that—very glad to hear that. All of it destroyed you say? This is good news indeed.'

'She can no longer carry on her business at the Soho Square Assembly Rooms. The property destroyed consists largely of furniture supplied for the use of the Rooms. It is not yet paid for. Therefore, she will be compelled to refer her creditors to you.'

'Her creditors? Does this abandoned woman owe any money, then?'

'I believe about £30,000 is the sum of her liabilities.'

He laughed. He laughed cheerfully, as if it was one of the merriest and heartiest jokes he had ever heard. 'Is that all? Why, man, it's nothing. Put it on my back; and as much more as you please: as much as the Bank of England contains. Why, I can bear it all. Nothing

makes any difference now. Tell her she is quite welcome to double it, if she can get the credit. It's all one to me.'

'That is what I came to tell you.'

'Very good, gaol-bird. Probus very nearly succeeded, did he not? You felt a kind of a tightening about the neck, I suppose. Never mind. Don't be disappointed. I dare say you will go to Tyburn after all. You are young yet, and then the fortune will come to me—and we shall see—we shall see'—he drank another glass of Nantes—'we shall see—— What was I going to say?'

So I left him and went on my way to Newgate.

Jenny was in conference with her attorney.

'Come in, Will. I have no secrets from my cousin, Mr. Dewberry. Now, if you please, give me your opinion.'

'First, then, if you plead Not Guilty—what can they prove against you? That certain things were found in your garrets? How did they get there? A wretched, revengeful drab says that your mother and sister put them there. Is her word to be believed? She is the sweetheart of a conspirator and, presumably, a highwayman, whom you have been instrumental in consigning to a prison, with probably a severe punishment to follow. Where are your mother and sister? They are gone away? Where? You cannot be asked. But you do not know. Why? To escape the revenge of the mob who have wrecked their house. Very well. There the case ends—and breaks down.'

'Not so. It does not break down. My mother has long been known as the greatest receiver in the trade. She bought more and sold more than anybody else. The Court dressmakers came to her to buy her lace and her embroidery for the great Court Ladies. Why, she is the most notorious woman in London. If I am acquitted, they will get up a Hue and Cry for her, and they will certainly find her. And then there isn't a thief in prison

or out who will not give evidence against her, after the evidence she has given against the thieves. And as for Doll —my sister's name is Doll—in order to save her own skin, she will most certainly be ready to give evidence to the effect that I bought the things of my mother and paid for them. Which I did. As I told you.'

'You never told me so. I don't know that it matters much. I am only trying to see my way to an acquittal. And considering there is nobody but that woman to testify to the conveyance of the goods, really, I think there ought to be no doubt as to the result.'

'Mr. Dewberry.' Jenny laid her hand upon his arm. 'Understand me. I have been kept down, all my life, by my origin. As soon as this business is over I shall try in some way or other to get clear away from them all—Oh! what an origin it is! Oh, how I have always envied the children of honest parents. Why—my father——'

'Dear lady, do not speak of these things.'

'Well, then, my cousins—I mean those of them who are not yet hanged—live in the courts and blind alleys of St. Giles. I have no longer any patience with them—it makes me wretched to think of them, and it humiliates me to go among them because I have to become again one of them and I do it so easily. Well, Sir, I am what I am: yet strange as it may seem to you—I will not lend my help to getting my mother and sister hanged.'

Mr. Dewberry took her hand and kissed it. 'Proceed, Madam,' he said gravely.

'If, then, I plead Guilty, the woman's evidence will be received without any dispute or discussion, and when sentence is passed, the case will be closed. No one, afterwards, will venture to charge my mother with that crime.'

'I suppose not. But the sentence, Madam, the sentence!'

She shuddered. 'I know what the sentence will be. But I am not afraid. I have friends who will come to my assistance.'

In fact, one of them appeared at that very moment. He was a gentleman of a singularly sweet and pleasant countenance, on which kindness, honour, and loyalty were stamped without the least uncertainty. He was dressed very finely in a satin coat and waistcoat, and he wore a sash and a star.

'Divine Jenny!' he said, taking her hand and kissing it. 'Is it possible that I find thee in such a place and in such a situation as this?'

Jenny suffered her hand to remain in his. When I think of her and of her behaviour at this juncture I am amazed at her power of acting. She represented, not her own feelings, which were those of the greatest disgust towards her nearest relations (to whom one is taught to pay respect), but the feelings which she wished Lord Brockenhurst, and, through him, the world at large, should believe of her.

In her left hand she held a white lace handkerchief, scented with some delicate perfume: the woman was one of those who are never without some subtle fragrance which seemed to belong to her, naturally. This handkerchief she applied to her eyes—from time to time: they were dry, to my certain knowledge, but the act was the outward semblance of weeping.

'My Lord,' said Jenny, 'this gentleman is my cousin—not of St. Giles—my husband's cousin—My husband, however, I cannot suffer to approach me. This other gentleman is Mr. Dewberry, of Great St. Thomas Apostle in the City of London, attorney at Law. They are considering my case with me. By your Lordship's permission we will renew our conference in your presence. If, on the other

'DIVINE JENNY!' HE SAID.

hand, you would prefer to hear, alone, what I have to state, they will leave us.'

'I am in your hands, Jenny,' he kissed her hand again and let it go. 'My sole desire is to be of service. Pray remember, Jenny, that whatever I promise I try to perform. All the service that I can render you in this time of trouble is at your command.'

I placed a chair for him and looked to Jenny to begin.

She sat down and buried her face in her hands while we all waited.

'My Lord,' she rose at last and continued standing, 'I once told you—at a time when it was impossible to conceal anything from you, that I was originally an Orange Girl at the Theatre where you honoured me frequently by witnessing my humble performances.'

'Say, rather, Jenny, inspired performances.'

She bowed her head, like some queen. 'If your Lordship pleases. I also told you that my parents were of the very lowest—so low that one can get no lower.'

'You did.'

'Now, my Lord, I am accused of receiving stolen property in my house, knowing the property to be stolen.'

'Oh! Monstrous! Most monstrous!'

'My accuser is a girl whose sweetheart is now by my evidence and the evidence of others lying in this prison beside me, on a charge of conspiracy. With the girl it is an act of revenge. She would tell you as much. The mob, also in revenge for exposing a most diabolical plot, has wrecked and sacked my mother's house in St. Giles's and my own in Soho Square. They have destroyed all that I possessed. I am therefore ruined. But that is nothing. On the stage, we care very little about losing or gaining money. This woman has now brought a charge against me which I blush even to name.'

'You have only to deny the charge, Jenny. There is not a man in London who would doubt the word of the incomparable Jenny Wilmot.'

She bowed her head again. 'I would I could think so.'

She made as if she would go on; then stopped and hesitated, looking down as if in doubt and shame.

'My Lord, I will put the case to you quite plainly. Mr. Dewberry is of opinion that the result, if the matter is brought before the court, will certainly be decided in my favour.'

'I am certain on the point,' said the Attorney. 'I beg your Lordship's pardon for my interruption.'

'Oh! Sir, who has a better right to interrupt?' He turned again to Jenny, whom he devoured with his eyes. Truly if ever any man was in love it was Lord Brockenhurst.

'If I were acquitted,' she went on. 'Indeed, I believe I should be acquitted—but the case would not be ended by that acquittal. Suppose, my Lord—I put a case—it need not be mine'—she plucked at the lace of her handkerchief as if deeply agitated—'I say, it need not be my own case—I suppose a case. Such a charge is brought against a person—perhaps innocent. She is acquitted—But the charge remains. It will then be brought against the real criminal. Out of revenge every thief in St. Giles's would crowd in to give evidence. That person's fate would be certain. She would be—she would be——your Lordship will spare me the word.' Again she covered her eyes. Then she lifted her head again and went on. 'I know that the—person—is guilty—She deserves nothing short of what the law provides. Yet reflect, my Lord. Born among rogues: brought up among rogues: without education and moral principles, or honour, or religion, can one wonder if such a person turns to crime? And can

you wonder, my Lord'—again she sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands—'can you wonder if the daughter should resolve to save the mother's life, by taking—upon herself—the guilt—the confession—the consequences of the crime?'

She was silent save for a sob that convulsed her frame. His Lordship heard with humid eyes. When she had finished he rose with tears that streamed down his face. For a while he could not speak. Then he turned to Mr. Dewberry.

'Sir,' he said, 'tell me—tell me—what she means.'

'She means, my Lord, to plead Guilty and to take the consequences. By so doing she will save her mother—yes, my Lord, her mother—even at the sacrifice of her own life.'

'Oh!' he cried, 'it must not be! Great Heavens! It must not be! Jenny—Jenny—thou art, I swear, an angel.'

'No, my Lord, no angel.'

'Yes, an angel! Hear me, Jenny. I will stand by thee. The world shall know—the world that loves thee—By —— the world shall know what a treasure it possesses in the incomparable Jenny Wilmot. As an actress thou art without an equal. As a child—as a daughter—history records no greater heroism. Thou shalt be written down in history beside the woman who saved her father from starvation and the woman who saved her husband from the traitor's block. I can endure it no longer, Jenny. To-morrow when my spirits are less agitated, I will come again.' He stooped and kissed her bowed head and so left us.

A common or vulgar actress, when the man for whom she had been playing had gone, would have laughed or in some way betrayed herself. Not so Jenny. She waited

a reasonable time after his Lordship's departure and then lifted her head, placed her handkerchief—still dry—to her eyes and stood up.

'Mr. Dewberry,' she said, 'do you agree with me in the line I have resolved to take?'

'Madame, I do,' he replied emphatically.

'And you, Will?'

I hesitated, because I perceived that she had been playing a part. Yet an innocent part. She did not, certainly, desire to bring her mother and sister to a shameful end: but, at the same time, she did not wish it to be known that she had really paid for the property and ordered its removal to her own house: she did not regard the landlady of the Black Jack with all the filial affection (not to speak of respect) which her emotion undoubtedly conveyed to his Lordship: on the other hand, it would serve her own case —as well as her estimable mother—better that she should be regarded as a voluntary victim to save a parent than that she should be acquitted in order to give place to her mother, who would certainly be convicted.

'I agree, Jenny—I agree,' I answered.

'Sir,' said Mr. Dewberry as we walked away, 'I have often heard Miss Jenny Wilmot described as an incomparable actress. I am now convinced of the fact.'

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SNARE WHICH THEY DIGGED FOR OTHERS.

THE same day on leaving Jenny, the Turnkey who conducted me to the gate, offered me congratulations—rather gruff and even forced—on the turn things had taken.

'I assure you, Sir,' he said with feeling, 'that we know

generally beforehand what will happen, and we'd quite made up our minds as to your case, spite of Madame's interest. There didn't seem any doubt. Some of us are a bit disappointed: we don't like, you see, for anyone to slip out. Well: there's always disappointments. Would you like to cast an eye on your friends—them that hatched that pretty plot? Come this way, then. I wouldn't like to be in their shoes if it comes to Pillory—and it will.'

So he led me out of the passage into one of the yards. At the sight of the place my heart sank to think how I had myself trodden those flagstones and stepped from side to side of those dismal walls. The place was the Master's side: there were twenty prisoners or more in it. One or two were sitting on the stone bench drinking beer and smoking tobacco: one was playing a game of fives by himself. My two principal witnesses, the Bishop and his friend the Captain, were walking side by side, both in irons. Mr. Probus sat in a corner, his head hanging down: taking no notice of anything. Mr. Merridew walked by himself with an assumption of being in the wrong place by accident and with an air of importance, the prisoners making way for him right and left, for the terror of his name accompanied him even into Newgate.

The turnkey called him. 'Merridew,' he said, with familiarity. 'Come and see the young gentleman you tried to hang. Now he'll hang you. That's curious, isn't it? Here we go up,' he turned to me with a philosophic smile, 'and here we go down.'

'Sir,' Mr. Merridew obeyed the call and approached me, bowing with great humility. His cringing salute was almost as nauseous as the impudent brutality which he had shown in the Thieves' Kitchen. 'Sir, I am pleased to make your honoured acquaintance. I hardly expected, in this place where I am confined by accident——'

'Oh! Sir, I did not come here to make your acquaintance, believe me.'

'Sir, I am pleased to have speech with you, even in this place, and if only to remove a misunderstanding which seems to have arisen regarding my part in the late unhappy business. If you will kindly remember, Sir, I merely testified to what I saw, being an accidental eye-witness. The night was dark: there was a scuffle. You will bear me out, Sir—so far—a scuffle—whether you were attacking that fellow'—he pointed to the Bishop, who with his friend the Captain was now looking on—'or that other fellow'—he indicated the Captain—'villains both, Sir,—both—who, but for my mistaken kindness, would have been hanged long ago—I cannot exactly say. I may have been—perhaps—we all make mistakes—too ready to believe the other side, and what they said. However, that is all over and, of course, I shall be set free in an hour or two. With expressions of sorrow, for an undeserved imprisonment——' He looked in my face for some expression of sympathy but, I believe, found none. 'No malice, Sir, I hope.' He held out the abominable hand which was steeped in the blood of his victims and rank with the stink of his wickedness. 'I hope, Sir, that if the case comes to trial, I may not see you among the prosecutors.' I maintained silence and took no notice of his proffered hand. 'But indeed, I shall certainly be out in an hour or two: or perhaps a day or two. My case has not yet, perhaps, been laid before the authorities. I am here as a mere matter of form. Ha!—form—in fact, I have no business here—no business at all—no business.' His voice sank to a whisper, showing the real agitation of his mind.

'Mr. Merridew, I have not come here with any desire to converse with you.'

'You are not going to bear malice, Mr. Halliday?

Be content with exposing two villains. Two will be enough—— If you want more there is Probus. He's an extraordinary villain. As for you, Sir, consider: you are a fortunate man, Sir. You ought to be in the condemned cell. You have got off against all expectation, and when everybody, to a man, thought it was a certainty. Had I been consulted by your sweetheart I should have advised her, Sir, I should, indeed, so strong a case was it—to my experienced mind, Sir, I should have advised her, Sir, to buy the cap and the ribbons and the nosegay and the Orange—Oh! a fortunate man, indeed!'

As if he had had nothing whatever to do with the case! As if there had been no Conspiracy!

I was turning away in disgust, when the other pair of villains drew near. I prepared for some volley of abuse and foul language, but was disappointed. They addressed me, it seemed, in no spirit of hostility, but quite the contrary. They were lamb-like.

'Sir,' said the Bishop, 'what was done by my friend and the Captain and myself was done by orders of Mr. Merridew here. He said, "Do it, or swing." So we had no choice. Merridew gave us the orders and Probus invented the plot. "Do it or swing," was the word.'

'You shall swing, too,' the Thief-taker turned upon him savagely, 'as soon as I get out. A pair of villains, not fit to live.'

'You won't hang anybody any more,' said the Captain, with defiance. 'Your own time's up at last, Merridew. Your own rope has come to an end.'

'Wait till I get out. Wait till I get out,' he roared.

'That won't be just yet, brother,' said the turnkey. 'Conspiracy's an ugly word, friend Merridew. There's imprisonment in it—and flogging, sometimes—and pillory. But make up your mind for a long stay and be comfortable.'

'Dick,' said Mr. Merridew. He knew every turnkey as well as most of the prisoners. It was said that he often had to go shares with the turnkeys. 'Dick, you know me, of old.'

'Ay—ay—We all know you.'

'We've worked together——'

'That is as may be. But go on.'

'Well, Dick, I am a sheriff's officer. I know all the rogues in London, don't I?'

'Why, certainly.'

'I know where to lay my hands upon every one. I know where they practise and what they do.'

'Correct,' said the turnkey.

'They don't dare to lock me up. Do they? Lock *me* up?' he snorted. 'Why, if I am kept here long, all the villains will go free. London will no longer be safe. There won't be fifty hangings in a year. Who fills your gaols? John Merridew. Who fills your carts? John Merridew. You know that, Dick. Nobody knows better than you.'

'Correct,' said Dick.

'The judges can't send me to prison. They can't do it, I say. Why—of course—of course——' Again his voice sank to a whisper.

I looked at the man with amazement. He was evidently seeking consolation by delusive assurances. At heart he was filled with terror. For beside the prison, there was the dread of pillory. They might be set in pillory. He knew, none better, that the thief-taker, who is also the thief-maker, has not a single friend in the whole world. What would be done to him if he should stand in pillory?

'Let me get out as soon as possible,' he went on, appealing to me. 'Why, Sir, unless I go out the whole criminal procedure of this country will be thrown out of gear. I

am the only man—the only man, Sir—ask Dick, here.' The turnkey shook his keys and nodded.

'But they'll give you a heavy sentence, my friend,' he said.

'The only man that can't be spared—the only man—the only man——' Again his voice dropped to a whisper. He turned away babbling and shaking his head, all the insolence gone out of him.

'His power is gone,' said the Bishop. 'He won't get any more rewards.'

'Yes,' said the turnkey. 'But he has had a long innings. Why, he must be nearly fifty. There's a many would envy Merridew.'

The Bishop once more addressed himself to me. 'Sir,' he said, 'I grieve to hear that our friends wrecked the Black Jack and Madame's house. I fear these acts of violence may make you vindictive.'

'Madame herself was brought in yesterday—for receiving stolen goods.'

'Madame? Madame brought here? On a charge——?' The Bishop's face expressed the liveliest concern.

'Why,' said the Captain. 'It's——' A motion of his fingers to his throat showed what he meant.

'Nothing could have been more disastrous,' said the Bishop. 'Believe me, Sir, we have nothing to do with the wreck of the houses, and we were ignorant of this charge, I assure you, Sir. Oh! This is a great misfortune!'

The misfortune, it appeared, lay in the danger—nay, the certainty, that this persecution would make both Madame and myself more vindictive. Now the events of the Trial, when at a word, as it seemed, from Madame, witnesses sprang up in a cloud to confront them with their villainy, made them believe that she had friends everywhere.

'It cannot be,' said the Bishop, 'but she will get off. Who is the principal evidence?'

'Ask the Captain. And that is enough.'

I stepped across the yard and laid my finger on Probus's shoulder as he sat with bowed form and hanging head. He looked up with lack-lustre eyes. I believe that the loss of his money and the result of his conspiracy had affected his brain, for he seemed to pay no heed to anything.

'Mr. Probus,' I said. 'I must tell you that my cousin is now bankrupt.'

He stared without any look of recognition.

'Mr. Probus,' I repeated, 'my cousin Matthew is a bankrupt. I tell you, in order that you may send in your claim with those of the other creditors.'

'Ay—ay—' he replied. 'Very like.'

'Bankrupt!' I said again. 'Even had you succeeded in your plot you would have been too late.'

He nodded without attention.

'And another mass of debts has been added. His wife's house has been wrecked by the mob and all her property destroyed. Therefore her liabilities have been presented to her husband.'

'All gone!' he moaned. 'All gone! The work of an honest lifetime wasted and thrown away. Nothing will ever be recovered.'

'Mr. Probus,' I said, 'the money is gone. That is most true. But more than that is gone. Your character—your honour—it is all gone—wasted and thrown away—none of it will be recovered.'

'All gone—all gone,' he repeated.

The turnkey stood beside me. 'Queer, isn't it?' he said. 'He's lost his money and his wits have gone after it. A moneylender, he was. He's put more poor folk

into the Fleet and the King's Bench than his friend Merridew has put prisoners here. And he ought to be thinking of something else—his trial and his sentence.'

'His sentence?'

'Well—you see, Merridew, he knows. This one doesn't. The Bishop, he knows—and the Captain—and they don't like it. This man doesn't care. For you see, they will certainly have to stand in Pillory—and if the mob don't love moneylenders they love thief-takers less, and Merridew's the most notorious thief-taker in town. Well—it's a wonderful country for Law and Justice. Now, I suppose they poor French would be content to hang up a man at once. We don't. We give 'em an hour's ride in a cart where they sometimes gets roses but more often gets addled eggs. Or we put 'em in pillory, where they may get dead cats or they may get flints and broken bottles.'

I came away. The heavy gate closed: the key turned in the lock; the four wretches were shut in once more, there, at least, the prey to the keenest terrors, dying a thousand deaths before they should be taken out for the dead cats and the addled eggs and perhaps the flints and broken bottles.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CASE OF CLARINDA.

THE town has notoriously a short memory, yet I doubt if there be any still living who remember the year 1760 and have forgotten the case of Jenny Wilmot. For, indeed, no one for some time talked of anything else. There were armies in the field; these were forgotten; there were fleets and naval battles and expeditions; these were forgotten;

there was the strife of party; that was forgotten; there were the anxieties of trade; they were forgotten; there were scandals among the aristocracy; they were forgotten; there was the new play; the new poem; all were clean forgotten and neglected while the town talked at my Lady's breakfast or Moll King's tavern of Jenny Wilmot; Jenny Wilmot; Jenny Wilmot. The world at first could find nothing too bad to say or think of her. At the clubs they suspended their play while they listened to the latest rumour about Jenny. At the coffee-houses every quidnunc and gobemouche brought a new story which he had heard and transmitted with embroideries; or else a trifling variation in the old story to communicate.

People remembered how she disappeared mysteriously from the stage a year or two before this catastrophe!—Ha! what a proof of wickedness was that! Why, it was now known that she was none other than Madame Vallance who provided the masquerades and the Assemblies in Soho Square and was never seen by the company except in a domino. There was another illustration of her wicked disposition! It was also recalled, for the benefit of those who did not remember the fact, that she had been an Orange Girl at Drury before she was promoted to the stage. What could be expected of an Orange Girl? And now it was actually brought to light—could one believe it!—it was actually discovered—had she not herself confessed it?—that her mother and sister kept a tavern in St. Giles's, a place of resort for the lowest; a mere thieves' kitchen; the rendezvous of highwaymen, footpads, pickpockets and rogues of every description.

It was certain that Jenny had been born and brought up in this vile receptacle or Temple of Vice. Many people were found who had recollections of Jenny as a child playing in the gutter, or on the steps of St. Giles's Church.

These recollections were of an edifying nature. One gentleman, of an aspect which we call smug—somewhat resembling, in fact, my cousin Matthew at his earliest and best—related in my hearing that he had addressed the child, and on hearing that her ambition was to become an Orange Girl at Drury Lane Theatre, had warned her against the perils of that path; unhappily without effect, except that while he was exhorting her to a godly life, his tears were checked by the theft of his pocket-handkerchief. And so on: and so on; because the occasion gave an opportunity for securing a momentary distinction, and when the imagination is fired the tongue is loosed.

Again, there is in the English mind something particularly repellent in the life and the acts of the informer. Now it cannot be denied that in my Trial, Jenny figured as one who had turned against her old friends and associates; had used her knowledge to secure their arrest; and had induced her mother and sister and at least one of the rogues of the Black Jack to join her in giving evidence against the conspirators. So that when the news was spread abroad that her house, as well as the Black Jack, had been wrecked and the contents destroyed there was at first a strong feeling among many that this was a kind of wild justice which she deserved, because she ought not to have turned against her friends. As for the man for whose sake she did it, you may be sure that the motive commonly attributed to her was such as would naturally commend itself to the majority. That any woman should be so deeply moved by generosity of heart, by love of justice, by honest indignation against so foul a conspiracy as to resolve, at all risks and hazards, to defeat the object of the villains, and to prevent the destruction of an innocent man, required too high a flight to make it possible to be considered by the common sort—I mean, not the poor, but

the common sort of 'respectable' burgesses; the folk of the coffee-house and the club. The world always accepts the worst where it ought to believe the best. And the wickedness of the natural man is never so strongly demonstrated as when he is searching for motives. In a word, it was pretended, and believed, that in order to rescue her lover—a broken-down gentleman and a highwayman—from the charge of robbery, which could only be proved by the witnesses taking false names, in order to protect themselves, being unfortunately rogues themselves, she brought a charge against them of conspiracy and exposed their true names and their history, which she could only effect by the knowledge she got from the Black Jack and the assistance of her mother: that her lover, it was true, was cast loose upon the world again; but that the innocence of those four persons, including one most respectable attorney, would be established as the noonday clear at the ensuing Criminal Court at the Old Bailey.

Further, it was spread abroad that Jenny had been arrested at her lover's house in the Rules of the King's Bench, that she had been brought before Sir John Fielding and had been by him committed to Newgate on a charge of receiving stolen goods. Receiving stolen goods! What, however, could one expect from St. Giles's and the daughter of the Black Jack? She who must needs expose the crimes of her friends was now in prison on a charge far more serious than theirs. Receiving stolen goods! Monstrous! And one who entertained even R—l P—s at her Assemblies! And she was all the time acting with her mother in receiving stolen goods! After this, what pity could one feel even for a woman so beautiful and so engaging as Jenny Wilmot? But was she beautiful? Some of the men raised this question. Painted for the stage: all artificial. Was she engaging? She played as she was

taught: she smiled and laughed as she was told to smile and laugh. That is not true acting. Alas! Poor Jenny! Poor favourite of the town, how wert thou fallen! And certainly for a day or two the reputation of Jenny was very low indeed.

Suddenly, however, there came a change—to me most welcome, because without doubt the mind of the town was poisoned and prejudiced against Jenny, in whose favour no one ventured to speak.

The first cause of the change was due to a paper—I think, if my memory serves me right, in the *Connoisseur*. In this paper the 'Case of Clarinda' put forth with great skill and power, thinly disguised, the history of Jenny. I venture to quote a portion of that paper. As soon as people understood that it was her history that was told the paper flew from hand to hand: everybody in the coffee-houses and the taverns cried out for it when they entered the house. And when it was read a silence fell upon the room and shame upon all hearts. The author, I have always understood, I know not why, was my Lord Brockenhurst, though he never confessed it.

The mottoes—there were two—were as follows:

> 'Non tali auxilio, non defensoribus istis
> Tempus eget;'

and

> 'Tandem desine matrem . . . sequi.'

'The Case of Clarinda, whose future yet remains to be determined, is one which ought to reduce to humility those who boast of our civilization and the justice of our institutions. For, certainly it will be allowed that the first requisite of justice is that the officers of the State shall be sufficiently provided with intelligence, with resources and with encouragement, to search into all cases

of alleged crime, and to take care by ascertaining especially the private character and previous history of the witnesses how far they are to be credited. In a word, and speaking of those cases in which human intelligence can be of avail, it should be impossible for an innocent man to be convicted of any crime charged to him. Yet the case of Clarinda shows that such is the condition of the times, such the weakness of our criminal procedure, that a conspiracy as vile, as villainous, as was ever concocted out of Hell would have succeeded to the judicial murder of an innocent man, had it not been for the activity, the courage, the lavish expenditure of a woman unaided and single-handed. Her efforts have resulted in the escape of the innocent man and the imprisonment of the conspirators. But at what a price for herself!

'Clarinda is the daughter of a widow who for a long time has kept a tavern in that part of the town known as St. Giles's. It is not pretended that the place is the resort of the Quality. There has been nothing, however, alleged against the conduct of the house or the character of the landlady. Some of the frequenters certainly belonged to the ranks of those who live by their wits. It is not the case, as alleged in some quarters, that Clarinda was ever the companion or the friend of these people. When she was still quite young she was placed in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre as an Orange Girl. Accident drew towards her the attention of the manager, who found her clever and attractive, with a lovely face and figure, a charming manner, and a beautiful voice. In a word, the Orange Girl was transferred to the stage, and there became the delight of the town; the greatest favourite of living actresses.

'After a time Clarinda, as often happens to actresses, grew weary of the stage, and longed for a quiet life in

the country, far from the lights and music and applause of the Theatre.

'Among the many who sighed for her was a young merchant from the city; he said he was rich; he swore he loved her; he promised to take her out of town to a country house where she would have a carriage, a garden, and all that she could desire.

'Clarinda listened. He was grave in demeanour; he was even austere; but this proved that he was free from the vices of the men she more frequently met. Clarinda accepted him, and they were married.

'She discovered, on the very day of her marriage, that he had lied to her. He was not rich, though once he had been possessed of a large fortune; he was a gambler; he had gambled away all his money; he had married her because she was lovely; he proposed to use her charms for the purpose of attracting rich gentlemen to his rooms, where he intended to carry on a gaming table.

'Clarinda on this discovery instantly left the man in disgust; but for the moment she would not go back to the stage. She then took a large house in one of the western squares. She decorated and furnished this house, and she opened it for Masquerades and Assemblies. One day she received a letter from two of the frequenters of her mother's house. They were in a Debtors' Prison: they were afraid of becoming known, in which case not only would other detainers be put in, but they might themselves be arrested on some criminal charge.

'Clarinda, always generous, went to the Prison, saw the two men, and promised them relief. It was an unfortunate act of generosity, which in the end worked toward her ruin.

'In the Prison she espied a young man so closely resembling in person her own unworthy husband that she accosted him, and learned that he was imprisoned, prob-

ably for life, by her husband aided by Mr. Vulpes, an Attorney, on a vamped-up charge of debt, with the hope of making him obtain his liberty by selling his chance of succession to a large fortune.

'She obtained the release of this gentleman, who, with his wife, can never cease to be sufficiently grateful to her. She gave him, for he was a fine musician, a place in her orchestra.

'She then learned that Vulpes, the attorney, together with one Traditor, a Thief-taker, was organizing another plot against this already injured gentleman. But she was unable to learn the nature of the plot, except that the two Villains whom she had released from Prison were involved in it. The next step was that the gentleman was accused by the whole party of four as a highway robber, and as such was cast into prison.

'Then it was that our Magistrates should have taken up the case. Clarinda repaired to Rhadamanthus, the Magistrate, and pointed out to him the truth. He told her that he had neither men nor money to follow up the case. Therefore Clarinda, at her own expense, fetched up from various country prisons turnkeys and governors who should expose the character of the witnesses; she persuaded her mother and sister to give evidence to the same effect; in order to do this, she was obliged to buy her mother out of the tavern. She herself gave evidence; and she made her unwilling husband give evidence. The result was the acquittal of the prisoner and the committal of the conspirators. Not the magistrates of the country; but—*Dux femina facti*—a woman, without assistance, single-handed, at her own private charges, has done this.

'"Non tali auxilio, non defensoribus istis
Tempus eget."

'That the mob should, in revenge, wreck her house and

destroy her property was to be expected at a time when we cannot protect our streets in the very daytime. But there was more.

'Clarinda's mother at the time of the trial had in her keeping a certain quantity of stolen property. Whether she knew it to be stolen or not cannot be said. When, however, the old woman accepted Clarinda's proposal that she should give evidence against the conspiracy, she seems to have thought that the garrets of her daughter's house would be a safe place for storing these goods. She was observed to be conveying them by a woman, the mistress of one of the conspirators. While the house was in the hands of the mob, this woman looked for, and found the property—a miserable paltry collection of rags—in the garrets. For the sake of revenge she brought information against Clarinda, who now therefore lies in Newgate waiting her trial at the Old Bailey.

'What should Clarinda do? If she pleads "Not Guilty," which under ordinary circumstances she should do; the more so as there is no evidence whatever to connect her with any knowledge of these rags; she will be acquitted; but then her mother will be arrested and tried on this capital charge. If, on the other hand, she takes upon herself the full responsibility, the mother escapes scot free while the daughter may pay the full penalty for the crime.

'The reader will not think it necessary to ask what course will be pursued by Clarinda. The generous heart which would risk all, sacrifice all, lavish all, in the cause of justice and for the rescue of a man—not her lover, but a worthless husband's cousin—from an ignominious and undeserved death, will assuredly not hesitate to save her erring mother even at the risk of her own life. That generous heart; that noble heart; will be sustained and followed unto the end, even though justice demands the

uttermost penalty, by the tears of all who can admire heroic sacrifice and filial martyrdom.'

There was more, but this is enough.

In a single day the voice of the people veered round to the opposite pole. It was wonderful how quickly opinion was changed. Jenny, who yesterday had been a traitress; a spy; a receiver of stolen goods; a hussy with no character; suddenly became a heroine; a martyr.

Then the men remembered once more that she was a wonderful actress; a most charming woman; a most beautiful, graceful, vivacious creature. Then, as of old, men recalled the evenings when as they sat in the pit, Jenny seemed to have singled out one by one each for a separate and individual smile, so that they went home, their heads in the clouds, to dream of things impossible and unspeakable, and all the old love for the Favourite returned to them, and they panted for Jenny to be set free.

During this time I was with Jenny all day long, ready to be of service to her. The more I observed her, the more I marvelled at the strange power which brought all men to their knees before her. She had but to smile upon them and they were conquered. The Governor of the Prison was her servant; the turnkeys were her slaves; her visitors crowded her narrow cell every afternoon, while Jenny received them dressed like a Countess with the manner of a Countess. Sometimes I was honoured by her commands to play to them; tea and chocolate were served daily. Great ladies came with the rest to gaze upon her; actresses, once her rivals, now came, all rivalry apart, to weep over her; gentlemen wrote her letters of passionate love; portrait painters begged on their knees permission to limn her lovely features. In a word, for a while the centre of fashion was Jenny's cell in Newgate.

And every day, among the visitors stood my Lord of Brockenhurst, foremost in sympathy and truest in friendship. He was, indeed, as Jenny had assured me, the most loyal of gentlemen and the most sincere of friends.

It must be added that Jenny's time in prison was not wholly spent in converting a cell into a drawing-room of fashion. The unfortunate women, her fellow-prisoners, were much worse off than the men; they had fewer friends; they were suffered to starve on the penny loaf a day, the allowance of the prison. They lay for the most part in cold and starvation; in rags and dirt and misery overwhelming. Jenny went into their yard and among them. There was the poor creature who had caused her arrest. She was half starved now. Jenny gave her food and spoke to her friendly without reproach; she sent food to others who were starving. She not only fed them; she talked with them, not about their sins, because poor Jenny knew nothing about sins except so far as that certain deeds are punished by the law; but she talked to them about being clean and neat: she revived the womanly instinct in them: made them wash themselves, dress their hair, and take pleasure again in making themselves attractive. Never had a woman a keener sense of the duty of women to be beautiful. She made them in a week or two so civilized that they left off fighting: there was not a black eye in the place; and while Jenny was in the ward there was hardly so much as a foul word. It was pretty to see how they loved her and welcomed her and would have worked themselves to death for her. Poor lost souls—if indeed they are lost! They must all be dead now. The horrible gallows has killed some; the gaol fever, others; the fever of bad food and bad drink and bad air, others, yet until the day of death I am sure that all remembered Jenny. Notably, there was her accuser.

She was sullen at first; she was revengeful; next she was ashamed and turned aside; then she wept; and then she became like a tame kitten following her through the ward, hungering and thirsting for one more word—one more word of friendship—from the very woman whom she had brought to this place.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FALLEN ALDERMAN.

Let me return to the wretched man who had caused this trouble. I learned that, although his two fellow-prisoners declared openly that Mr. Merridew's power was gone and that he would never again have the power to hang anybody, some of his credit was still maintained: he pretended that the books—of which he spoke often and with pride—were still kept up, and that every man's life and liberty were in his hands: and many poor rogues, thinking to curry favour, waited upon him daily, bringing him presents of wine, tobacco and (secretly) rum, so that he was able to be drunk and to forget his anxieties for the greater part of the day. The two rebels against his authority, the Bishop and the Captain, carried themselves bravely: there is, indeed, in the profession of the rogue something of the soldier, in that they both brave dangers without fear. The battlefield is covered with the dead and wounded: but there are plenty left standing unhurt: every soldier thinks he will escape: the rogue's field of honour is covered with whipping-posts, stocks, pillory, and gallows. It is far more dangerous than the field of battle. Yet every rogue hopes to escape, and carries himself accordingly. Perhaps it is better so. One would not wish

such a crew to be whining and snivelling and pretending repentance and imploring pity.

One day I met, coming out of the prison, one whose face and appearance I knew. He was old and bent, and in rags: his woollen stockings were in holes: the elbows of his coat were gone: his hat was too limp to preserve its shape: his buttons were off his coat—he wore the old jasey with a broken pigtail. I touched him on the shoulder.

'You are Mr. Probus's clerk?' I said.

'If I am, Sir,' he replied, 'is that a crime?'

'No—no—no. But you remember me? You bade me once go throw myself into the river with a stone about my neck.'

'Ay—ay,' he replied. 'Yes, I remember you now. I did, I did. Was it good advice, young man?'

'It was, doubtless, very good advice. But I did not take it. What are you doing here?'

'I come to look after my master,' he replied simply.

'Your master? He has kept you in rags and wretchedness. He has given you a starvation wage.'

'Yet he is my master. I have eaten his bread, though it was bitter. I come every day to look after him.'

'Has he no friends? No wife or children to do this for him?'

'His friends were his money-bags till he lost them. They were his wife and children as well.'

'Has he no relations—cousins—nephews?'

'Perhaps—he has driven them all away long ago.'

'You are his friend at least.'

'I am his clerk,' he repeated. 'Sir, since my master found that all his money had been thrown away and lost, he has not been himself. He has been mad with rage and grief. That is why he hatched that unfortunate plot. I

was in Court and heard it. Ah! he was not himself, Sir, I assure you. Common tricks he practised daily, because he knew how far he could go. But not such a big job as this conspiracy. In his sober senses he would not have been so mad. Have you seen him, Sir? Have you observed the change in him? 'Twould bring tears to a flint. He moans and laments all day long.'

'Yes, I have seen him.'

'Sir, he thinks about nothing else. Sir, I verily believe that he does not know even that he is in Newgate. All the money he had in the world is gone—lent to Mr. Matthew and lost by Mr. Matthew. Terrible! Terrible!'

'Was there not some lent to the man Merridew?'

'A trifle, Sir: a few hundreds only. No: it is all gone. My master and I must become beggars and go together into the workhouse.' He shook his poor old head and went his way.

Now, this man had received the treatment of a dog. How long he had been with Probus: what was his previous history I never knew: it matters not: he had received the treatment of a dog and the wages of a galley slave: yet he was faithful and stood by his master—the only living thing who did—in his adversity as in his prosperity.

I next heard from Mr. Ramage that the Counting House was closed and the gates of the Quay locked: that Matthew had run away. Then that the unfortunate Alderman, partner in the House, had been arrested for debt and was taken to the Fleet Prison. After this, that Matthew had been arrested: that he was bankrupt: that he had been taken to the same prison: and that the whole amount of the liabilities was now so great that this meant certain imprisonment for life. By the custom of London, too, a creditor may, before the day of payment, arrest his

debtor, and oblige him to find sureties to pay the money on the day it shall become due. By this custom the whole of Jenny's liabilities became the cause of new detainers, so that I believe the total amount for which Matthew was imprisoned was not far short of £150,000. I conveyed this intelligence to my mistress.

'Misfortune,' she said gravely, 'is falling upon all of us. Thou alone wilt survive—the triumph of virtue. Go, however, take the man something, or he will starve. Give it him from me, Will. Tell him—tell him——' She considered for a little. 'Tell him—as soon as I can forget, I will forgive. Not that he cares whether he is forgiven or not. A man, Will, I very truly believe, may be anything he pleases—drunkard—murderer—highwayman: yet something may still survive in him of human kindness. There will still be a place, perhaps, for compassion or for love. But for a gambler there is no compassion left. He is more hardened than the worst villain in this wretched place: he has neither sense, nor pity, nor affection, nor anything. He is all gambler.'

'I will give him your money, Jenny. But not your message.'

She smiled sadly. 'Go, Will. The money will solace him as long as it lasts. Perhaps a quarter of an hour.'

I repaired without delay to the Fleet Prison. Those who walk up and down the Fleet market know of the open window in the wall and the grating, behind which stands a man holding a tin box which he rattles to attract attention while he repeats his parrot cry, 'Pity the Poor Prisoners! Pity the Poor Prisoners!' This humiliation is imposed upon those of the Common side: they must beg or they must starve. What was my surprise and shame—who could believe that one of my family should fall so low?—to recognise in the prisoner behind these bars, my cousin

Matthew! None other. His face was pale—it had always been pale: now it was white: his hand shook: he was unshaven and uncombed: I pretended not to notice him. I entered the prison and was told that he was holding the plate, but would be free in half an hour. So I waited in the yard until he came out, being relieved of his task. I now saw that he was in rags. How can a man dressed as a substantial merchant fall into rags in a few days? There was but one answer. The gambler can get rid of everything: Matthew had played for his clothes and lost.

I accosted him. At sight of me he fell into a paroxysm of rage. He reviled and cursed me. I had been the cause of all his misfortunes: he wept and sobbed, being weak for want of food and cold. So I let him go on until he stopped and sank exhausted upon the bench.

Then I told him that I had come to him from his wife. He began again to curse and to swear. It was Jenny now who was the cause of all his troubles: it was Jenny who refused to obey him: her liabilities alone had prevented him from weathering the storm: he should certainly have weathered the storm: and so on—foolish recrimination that meant nothing.

I made no answer until he had again exhausted his strength, but not his bitterness.

'Matthew,' I said, 'the woman against whom you have been railing sends you money. Here it is. Use it for living and not for gambling.' The money I gave him was five guineas.

The moment he had it in his hand he hurried away as fast as he could go. I thought he ran away in order to conceal his agitation or shame at receiving these coals of fire. Not so, it was in order to find out someone who would sit down to play with him. Oh! It was a madness

I watched him. He ran to the kitchen and bought some food. He swallowed it eagerly. Then he bent his steps to the coffee-room. I followed and looked in. He was already at a table opposite another man, and in his hands was a pack of cards. In a few hours or a few minutes—it mattered not which—Jenny's present of five guineas would be gone, and the man would be destitute again. Poor wretch! One forgave him all, considering this madness that had fallen upon him.

'But,' said Jenny, 'he was bad before he was mad. He was bad when he married me: he is only worse: nothing more is the matter with him.'

But my uncle, the Alderman, also involved in the bankruptcy, had been carried to the same place, while his great house on Clapham Common, with all his plate and fine furniture, had been sold for the benefit of the creditors. Matthew had ruined all. I went to see him. He was on the Master's, not the common side. It was a most melancholy spectacle. For my own part I bore the poor man no kind of malice. He had but believed things told him concerning me. He gave me his hand.

'Nephew,' he said, his voice breaking, 'this is but a poor place for an Alderman: yet it is to be my portion for the brief remainder of my days. What would my brother—your father—have said if he had known? But he could not even suspect: no one could suspect——'

'Nay, Sir,' I said, 'I hope that your creditors will give you a speedy release.'

'I doubt it, Will. They are incensed—and justly so—at their treatment by—by—Matthew. They reproach me with not knowing what was doing—why, Will, I trusted my son'—he sobbed—'my son—Absalom, my son—the steady sober son, for whom I have thanked God so often: Will, he made me believe evil things of thee: he accused

thee of such profligacy as we dare not speak of in the City: profligacy such as young men of Quality may practise but not young men of the City. I dared not tell my brother all that he told me.'

'Indeed, Sir, I know how he persuaded not only you but my father as well—to my injury. In the end it was my own act and deed that drove me forth, because I would not give up my music.'

'If not that, then something else would have served his purpose. Alas! Will. Here come your cousins. Heed them not. They are bitter with me. Heed them not.'

The girls, whom I had not seen since my father's funeral, marched along with disdainful airs, pulling their hoops aside, as once before, to prevent the contamination of a touch. They reddened when they saw me, but not with friendliness.

'Oh!' said one, 'he comes to gloat over our misfortunes.'

'Ah! No doubt they make him happy.'

'Cousins,' I said, 'I am in no mood to rejoice over anything except my own escape from grievous peril. The hand of the Lord is heavy upon this family. We are all afflicted. As for your brother Matthew, it is best to call him mad.'

'Who hath driven him mad?' asked Amelia, the elder. 'The revengeful spirit of his cousin!'

This was their burden. Women may be the most unreasonable of all creatures. These girls could not believe that their brother was guilty: the bankruptcy of the House: the stories of his gambling: his marriage with an actress: his evidence in the Court: were all set down as instigated, suggested, encouraged, or invented, by his wicked cousin, Will. It matters not: I have no doubt that the legend had grown in their minds until it was an article of their creed: if they ever mention the Prodigal Son—

who is now far away—it is to deplore the wicked wiles by which he ruined their martyred Saint: their brother Matthew.

'It is of no use,' I said to my uncle, 'to protest, to ask what my cousins mean, or how I could have injured Matthew, had I desired. I may tell you, Sir, that I learned only a short time ago that Matthew was a gambler: that the affairs of the House were desperate: and that an attempt was to be made upon my life—an attempt of which Matthew was cognizant—even if he did not formally consent. So, Sir, I take my leave.'

They actually did not know that Matthew was within the same walls.—Father and son: the father on the Master's side, dignified at least with the carriage of fallen authority: the son a ragged, shambling creature, with no air at all save that of decay and ruin. Unfortunate indeed was our House: dismal indeed was its fall: shameful was its end.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE END OF THE CONSPIRACY.

THE trial of our four friends for conspiracy took place in the middle of January. For my own part, I had to relate in open Court the whole history with which you are already acquainted: the clause in my father's will giving me a chance of obtaining a large fortune if I should survive my cousin: the attempts made by Mr. Probus to persuade me to sell the chance of succession: the trumping up of a debt which never existed: my imprisonment in a debtors' Prison: my release by Jenny's assistance: the renewed attempts of Mr. Probus to gain my submission: his threats:

and the truth about the alleged robbery. I also stated that two of the defendants had been imprisoned in the King's Bench at the same time as myself and that they were at that time close companions.

The Counsel for the defence cross-examined me rigorously but with no effect. My story was plain and simple. It was, in a word, so much to the interest of Mr. Probus to get me to renounce my chance that he stuck at nothing in order to effect this purpose—or my death.

I sat down and looked about me. Heavens! with what a different mind from that with which I stood in the dock now occupied by my enemies. I should have been more than human had I not felt a great satisfaction at the sight of these four men standing in a row. Let me call it gratitude, not satisfaction. The spectacle of the chief offender, the contriver of the villainy, Mr. Probus, was indeed enough to move one's heart to terror, if not to pity. The wretched man had lost, with the whole of his money, the whole of his wits. The money was his God, his Religion, his Heaven: he had lost the harvest of a life: he was old: he would get no more clients: he would save no more money. He would probably have to make a living, as others of his kind have done, by advising and acting as an attorney for the rabble of St. Giles and Clerkenwell. He stood with rounded shoulders and bowed head: he clutched at the iron spikes before him: he pulled the sprigs of rue to pieces: he appeared to pay no attention at all to the evidence.

Mr. Merridew, on the other hand, showed in his bearing the greatest possible terror and anxiety: he gasped when his Counsel seemed to make a point in his favour: he shivered and shook when his part in the plot was exposed. He who had given evidence in so many hanging cases unconcerned, now stood in the dock himself. He was made

to feel—what he had never before considered—the natural horror of the prisoner and the dreadful terror of the sentence.

The case might have been strengthened by the evidence of the landlady of the Black Jack. She, worthy soul, was out of the way, and no one inquired after her. Nor was her daughter Doll present on the occasion. But there was evidence enough. The gaolers and masters of the country prisons proved the real character of the two witnesses who called themselves respectively a clergyman and a country gentleman. Ramage, the clerk, proved, as before, that Probus brought Merridew to the Counting House. Jack, the country lad, proved the consultations at the Black Jack between Probus, Merridew, and the two others. These two, indeed, behaved with some manliness. They had given up all hope of an acquittal and could only hope that the sentence would be comparatively light. They therefore made a creditable appearance of undaunted courage, a thing which is as popular in their profession as in any other.

I do not suppose their crime was capital. Otherwise the Judge would most certainly have sent them all to the gallows.

'Many,' he said, at the end, 'are justly executed for offences mild indeed, in comparison with the detestable crime of which you stand convicted.'

When the case was completed and all the evidence heard, the Judge asked the prisoners, one after the other, what they had to say in their own defence.

'Ezekiel Probus, you have now to lay before the Court whatever you have to urge in your own defence.'

Mr. Probus, still with hanging head, appeared not to hear. The warder touched him on the shoulder and whispered. He held up his head for a moment: looked round the court, and murmured:

'No—no—it is all gone.'

Nothing more could be got from him.

'John Merridew, you have now the opportunity of stating your own case.'

He began in a trembling voice. He said that he had been long a sheriff's officer: that he had incurred great odium by his zeal in the arrest of criminals: that it was not true that he had concocted any plot either with Mr. Probus or with the other prisoners: that he was a man of consideration whose evidence had frequently been received with respect in that very Court: that it was not true, further, as had been stated by the Prosecution, that he had ever encouraged thieves or advised them to become highwaymen: that, if he went to such places as the Black Jack, it was to arrest villains in the cause of Justice: that he deposed at the last trial what he saw or thought he saw—namely a scuffle: he might have been in too great a hurry to conclude that the late prisoner Halliday was the assaulting party: the night was dark: he only knew the two witnesses as two rogues whom he intended to bring to justice on a dozen capital charges for each, as soon as he was out of Newgate: and that he was a person—this he earnestly begged the Court to consider—without whom the criminal Courts would be empty and Justice would be rendered impossible. With more to the same effect, and all with such servile cringings and entreaties for special consideration as did him, I am convinced, more harm than good.

When it came to the Doctor's turn, he boldly declared that if the verdict of the Jury went against him—'And gentlemen,' he said, 'I must own that the evidence has certainly placed me in a strange, and unexpected and most painful position'—he would bring over the Archbishop of Dublin: the Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral: and the

Provost of Trinity College: besides noblemen of the Irish Peerage and many of his old parishioners in order to prove that he was what he pretended to be. 'The assurance, gentlemen, that I shall be thus supported, enables me to bear up even against your possible view of the case and his Lordship's possible opinion. To a Divine of unblemished life it is, I confess, inexpressibly painful to be confused with forgers and highwaymen.'

Lastly, the gallant Captain spoke of himself. 'This,' he said with a front of brass, 'is a case of most unfortunate resemblance. It appears that I bear some likeness to a certain notorious robber and highwayman called, it is said, the Captain.' Here the whole Court burst into laughter, so unabashed was the villain when he pronounced these words. He looked round him with affected wonder. 'The event of this trial, however,' he went on, 'matters but little, because in two or three weeks I can bring to town the Mayor and Aldermen, the Town Clerk, the Rector of the Church and the Master of the Grammar School of my native town to testify that I am what I have declared myself to be. This being so, gentlemen, you may proceed, if you please, to do your duty.'

The Judge then summed up. He went through the whole case, adopting the views of the Counsel for the Prosecution. He said that the evidence before him was practically unshaken. It showed that these men, who had pretended to know nothing of each other, were in fact banded and allied together—in short he gave the whole weight of his opinion against the prisoners. Indeed, I cannot think what else he could do, seeing the nature of the evidence. So he left the jury to find their verdict.

They found it, without leaving the box. It was a verdict of 'Guilty' against all four prisoners. I looked to see the Judge assume the black cap. To my surprise, he

did not. He began by commenting in the strongest terms on the diabolical wickedness of the conspiracy. He said that he could find no difference as to the respective guilt of one or the other. The prisoner Probus, a member of a learned profession, was the contriver or designer of the deed: perhaps he might be thought the worst. Indeed, his was a depth of infamy to which it was difficult to find a rival or an equal. He would be punished worse than the rest because he would infallibly lose by his disgrace his profession and his practice. The infamy of the prisoner Merridew, when one considered the hold that he had over a large number of criminals and rogues, was very close to that of the prisoner Probus. He had apparently forced the other two into carrying out the plot, on threat of informing against them. In short, he pronounced the sentence of the court; namely, that the prisoners should stand in pillory for an hour and then be imprisoned for the space of four years.

On hearing the sentence Mr. Merridew shrieked aloud. 'My Lord!' he cried. 'My Lord! Have mercy! They will murder me!'

They led him off crying that he was a murdered man. The Doctor swelled out his cassock. 'The Archbishop,' he said, 'will arrive, I believe, next week. There will still be time for his Grace to procure my release.' So rolling his head and squaring his sleeves, he followed along the passage which leads to the Prison.

I left the Court and made my way through the crowd to the gates of Newgate in order to tell Jenny.

'Four years,' she said, 'will more than suffice to ruin the man Merridew. His companies of thieves will be broken up; he will no longer have any hold over them. He will have to turn rogue himself. When all has been said, this is the greatest villain of them all. I hope they will not

maltreat the prisoners in pillory; because there they are defenceless. But a thief-taker—a thief-taker, they cannot abide. If I were Mr. Merridew I should wish the job well over.'

While we were discoursing there came a message from the Captain. Would Madame grant him the favour of speech with her?

He came in, walking with his heavy clanking irons. He had lost the braggart swagger which he assumed at the trial, and now looked as humble as any pickpocket about to undergo the discipline of the pump.

'Madame,' he said, 'I thank you for this favour.'

'Your trial is over, Captain, I hear.'

'It is over,' he sighed. 'Mr. Halliday, Sir, I hope you are satisfied.'

'I desire no revenge,' I said. 'I want safety and peace—nothing more. These blessings you and your friends denied me.'

'It is quite true, sir. It was a most damnable plot. The only excuse for me is that I had no choice but to comply and obey, or be hanged.'

'Captain, I do not desire more of your company than is necessary. Will you tell me what you want of me?'

'The sentence is'—he made a wry face—'Pillory. Pillory, Madame. And four years' imprisonment. But the four years will pass—what I fear is Pillory.'

'I have heard of a man's friends protecting him.'

'Mine will do what they can. But, Madame, my fear is not so much on my own account as that I may be put up on the same scaffold with Mr. Merridew or Mr. Probus. There isn't a rogue in London who will not come out with something for the thief-taker. Madame, no one knows the terror in which we poor robbers live. The world envies us our lot; they think it is glorious to ride out of a moon-

light night and stop the coach all alone. They don't know that the thief-taker is always behind the highwayman. He lays his hand on the largest share of the swag; he encourages lads to take to the roads, and whenever he wants money he says that the time is up and then he takes the reward. My time was up.'

'I know all this—unhappily—as well as you. What do you want me to do?'

'Mr. Probus—he will prove quite as unpopular as Merridew. They thirst for his blood. There will be murder done in the pillory. Madame, for the love of God, do something for me.'

'What?'

'You have great influence. Everybody knows what powerful friends you have. Make them put the two unpopular prisoners on the same scaffold. They will share the flints between them. Let me stand up beside the Bishop. Nobody will give us much more than a dead cat or two and a basket of rotten eggs. But the other two'—he shivered with cold terror—'I know not what will happen to them.'

'Well, Captain, perhaps if Merridew gives up the profession, you may possibly turn honest man again when you go out of this place.'

He shook his head. 'No, that is impossible.'

'Well, I will do this. The Governor of the Prison is civil to me. I will ask him as a special favour to place you as you desire. I hope that you both—the Bishop as well as yourself—will enjoy your short hour on that elevated position. Will, give the Captain a bottle of wine to take away with him. You can go, sir.'

CHAPTER XX.

THE HONOURS OF THE MOB.

It was far from my intention to witness the reception of my friends in Pillory from the sympathizing mob. I was, however, reminded that the day had arrived by finding in my morning walk from Lambeth to the Old Bailey the Pillory itself actually erected, in St. Martin's Lane, somewhat above St. Martin's Church. It was put up in the open space where Long Acre runs into St. Martin's Lane, very nearly in the actual spot where the assault was delivered and the plot carried out. A just retribution. Even now, after thirty years, only to think of the villainy causes my blood to boil: nothing surely could be bad enough for these creatures, vilest of all the vile creatures of this wicked town. At the same time when I saw the preparations that were making for the reception of the criminals, my heart sank, and I would willingly have spared them all and forgiven them all to save them from what followed.

The pillory, on a scaffold four feet high, was put up with 'accommodation'—if we may so describe it—for two persons standing side by side, so that they could not see each other. They were also so close together that favours intended for the face of one might if they missed him be received by some part of the body of the other. A vast crowd was already assembled, although the sentence would not be carried out till eleven, and it was then barely nine. The crowd consisted of the scum and off-scouring of the whole city: there was a company from Southwark. While I was looking on, they arrived marching in good form like soldiers: there were contributions from Turnmill Street

and Hockley-by-the-Hole: there were detachments from the Riverside: from St. Katherine's by the Tower: from Clerkenwell: but, above all, from St. Giles's.

'Who is to stand up there to-day?' I asked one of them—a more decent-looking man than most. Of course, I knew very well, but I wished to find out what the people intended.

'Where do you come from, not to know that?' the man replied. ''Tis the thief-taker: him that makes the rogue: teaches the rogue and then sells the rogue. Now we've got him—wait till we leave him. And there's the lawyer who made the plot to hang a man. We've got him, too. We don't often get a lawyer. Wait a bit—wait a bit. You shall see what they'll look like when we leave them.'

He had his apron full of something or other—rotten eggs, perhaps: or rotten apples: or, perhaps, brickbats. The faces of all around expressed the same deadly look of revenge. I thought of the Captain's terror, and of his petition to Jenny; that he might be put up with the Bishop; it was impossible not to feel awed and terrified at the aspect of so much hatred and such deliberate preparation for revenge. A thief-taker and a lawyer! Oh! noble opportunity! Some carried baskets filled with missiles: some had their aprons full; the women for their part brought rotten eggs and dead cats, stinking rabbits, and all kinds of putrid offal in baskets and in their arms, as if they had been things precious and costly. They conferred together and laughed, grimly telling what they had to throw, and how they would throw it.

'I don't waste my basket,' said one, 'on rotten eggs. There's something here sharper than rotten eggs. He took my man before his time was up, because he wanted the money. My man was honest before he met Merridew,

who made him a rogue, poor lad!—yes, made him—told him what to do—taught him: made him a highwayman: told him where to go; hired a horse for him and gave him a pistol. Then he sold him—got forty pounds and a Tyburn ticket for him and twenty pounds allowance for his own horse. Oh! If my arm is strong enough! Let me get near him—close to him, good people.'

'He took my son,' said another, 'to be sure he was a rogue, but he thieved in a safe way till John Merridew got him. If I had my strength that I used to have it wouldn't be rotten eggs; but never mind—there's others besides me. Don't waste your brickbats: throw straight: let the women get to the front. Oh! He shall look very pretty when he is carried home. He shall have a pleasant hour with his friends. We love him, don't we? We love him like a son, we do.'

This man had for years exercised absolute sway over Rogueland. He instructed the young in the various branches of the criminal's horrid trade: he led them on from pocket-picking to stealing from stalls and bulk-heads: to shoplifting; to burglary; to robbery in the street: to forgery: to coining and issuing false coin: to highway robbery and, at times, to murder. 'Twas the most accomplished and the most desperate villain that ever lived—I cannot believe that his like was ever known. No one dared to cross him or to refuse his orders. If anyone should be so presumptuous, he speedily repented in Newgate under a capital charge followed by a capital sentence. There are so many ways of getting hanged, and so few outside the law know what offences may be capital and what are not, that there was never any certainty in the mind of the smallest rogue that he was safe from such a charge. Children of fourteen on his information were hung as well as grown men: little girls of fourteen were

hung on his information as well as grown women: for shoplifting, for lifting linen from the hedge—why this devil incarnate would instigate a child to commit a capital offence and then give him into custody for the reward, careless whether the child was hanged or not. It was a terrible end that he met with. I read sometimes of dreadful punishments: of tortures and agonies: yet I cannot picture to myself a punishment more awful than to stand up before an infuriated and implacable mob; to look down upon thousands of faces and to see no gleam of relenting upon one: not one with a tear of pity: to hear their yells of execration: to see their arms springing up with one consent—— Poor wretch! Poor wretch!

These people knew very well that Mr. Merridew could hang them all: that, in course of time, he would hang them all; and that, if they offended him, he would hang them all at once. It was a terrible weapon for one man to wield: nor can I believe that the laws of the land intended that any one man should be able to wield such a weapon. Why they allowed him to exist I know not—seeing their insensibility to crime, one would think that they would have murdered him long before. From wives he had taken their husbands; from mothers their sons; from girls their sweethearts: he had taken their wives and their mistresses from the men; he had taken the boys—one cannot say the innocent boys—from their playfellows; and he had hanged them all. It would be interesting to know how many he had hanged, this murderous, blood-stained villain, whose heart was like the nether millstone for hardness.

The punishment of pillory hands a man over to the people, for judgment and execution or for acquittal or for pardon. The law says practically, 'We find him guilty: we assign him a term of imprisonment: it is for the people

to increase the punishment or to protest against it.' In the case of a common rogue, whose offence is in no way remarkable, a few rotten eggs, broken on his face and dropping in yellow streams over the nose and cheeks, please the mob, who like this harmless demonstration in favour of virtue, which does not hurt their friend and brother, the prisoner. In other cases, where the sympathy of the people is entirely with the prisoner, one hour of pillory means an hour of triumph. For they bring bands of music and welcome the criminal; they shout applause: they hang the pillory with flowers: they take out the horses and drag the carriage. This happened to Dr. Shebbeare, who came to the pillory in the sheriff's carriage and stood in front of the pillory, not in it, a man holding an umbrella over his head the whole time to keep off the rain. It is, however, the most terrible punishment that can be devised when the mob are infuriated with the prisoner. In this case the thief-taker, the Man-Slayer, was about to stand before them: and with him the designer of a plot to take away the life of an innocent man.

The crowd now became so dense that it was impossible to get forwards or back. Therefore, though it might seem revengeful to look on at the popular reception of these two wretches, I was fain to stay where I was, namely, on the top step of Slaughter's Coffee House. The time passed quickly while I stood looking on and listening. The crowd grew thicker: on the outskirts with me were many respectable persons. Their indignation against the crime was, like mine, tempered by the prospect of the horrible punishment that awaited the evil-doers. I would not tell them that I myself was the object of this plot, for fear of being considered as wishing to enjoy a revenge full and satisfying.

'The greatest villain of the four,' said one gentleman,

'is the attorney. He will barely escape, I think: but these people are assembled to vent their revenge upon the thief-taker. I know not whether, when he is gone, crime will decrease, but it is time that something was done to prevent the encouragement of crime with one hand, and the arrest of the criminal with the other. Such a wretch, Sir, is not fit to live.'

'And,' said another, 'unless I mistake, we are here to witness the resolution of the mob that he shall no longer live.'

At eleven o'clock there was a shout which ran all down St. Martin's Lane. 'Here they come! here they come!' followed by roars which were certainly not meant for applause and approval.

'It is an awful moment,' said my next neighbour. 'If I could get out of the throng I would go away. It will be a terrible spectacle.'

There was a force of constables round the pillory. As it appeared immediately afterwards, it was insufficient. They formed a circle standing shoulder to shoulder, to keep back the crowd and to preserve an open space round the scaffold. It is a merciful plan, because the greater the distance, the better is the prisoner's chance.

The prisoners were brought in a cart. It was recognised by the crowd as a cart used for flogging unfortunates, and there were jokes on the subject, perhaps the hitching of shoulders, as it passed. It was guarded by a force of constables armed with clubs; not that they feared a rescue, but that they feared a rush of the crowd and the tearing of the prisoners to pieces.

I was standing, I say, on the highest doorstep of Slaughter's Coffee House, the windows of which were full of men looking on. Looking thus over the heads of the people, I saw that the driver and the prisoner Probus were

covered already with filth and with rotten eggs. The former cursed the people. 'Why can't you wait—you?' he cried as the eggs flew about his head or broke upon his face. Mr. Probus sat on the bench bowed and doubled up. He showed no fear: he was as one who is utterly broken up, and in despair: he had lost his money—all his money: the work of his life. That was all he cared for. He was disgraced and imprisoned—he had lost his money. He was going to be pelted in the pillory—he had lost his money—nothing else mattered.

To a revengeful man this day's work was revenge indeed, ample and satisfying, if revenge can ever satisfy. I do not think it can: one would want to repeat it every day: the man in the Italian Poem who gnaws his enemy's head can never have enough of his cruel and horrid revenge. I hope, however, that no one will think that I rejoiced over sufferings, terrors, and pain unspeakable; even though they were deserved.

If Mr. Probus showed callousness and insensibility extraordinary, his companion behaved in exactly an opposite manner. For he had thrown himself down in the bottom of the cart, and there lay writhing while the execrations of the people followed the cart. When the procession arrived at the pillory it took six men to drag him out. He covered his face with his hands: he wept—the tears ran down his cheeks: he clung to the constables; it took a quarter of an hour before they had him up the steps and on the platform: it took another ten minutes before he was placed in the machine, his face turned towards the crowd on the north side, his helpless hands stuck through the holes. As for the other, he stood facing the south.

When both the miserable men were ready the under-sheriff and the constables ducked their heads and ran for

their lives from the stage down the ladder and waited under cover.

For, with a roar as of a hungry wild beast the mob began. There was no formal or courteous commencement with rotten eggs and dead cats. These things, it is true, were flung, and with effect. But from the very beginning they were accompanied by sharp flints, stones and brick-bats. The mob broke through the line of constables and filled up the open space; they pushed the women to the front: I think they were mad: they shrieked and yelled execrations: the air was thick with missiles; where did they come from? There was neither pause nor cessation. For the whole time the storm went on: the under-sheriff wanted, I have heard, to take down the men; but no one would venture on the stage to release them. Meanwhile with both of them the yellow streams of broken eggs had given way to blood. Their faces and heads were covered every inch—every half inch—with open bleeding wounds: their eyes were closed, their heads held down as much as they could: if they groaned; if they shrieked; if they prayed for mercy; if they prayed for the mercy of Heaven since from man there was none; no one could hear in the Babel of voices from the mob. It was the Thief-taker, the Man-slayer, who was the principal object of the crowd's attention: but they could not distinguish between the two, and they soon threw at one head or the other impartially. It was indeed a most dreadful spectacle of the popular justice. Just so, the Jews took out the man who worshipped false idols, and the woman who was a witch and stoned them with stones, so that they died. For my own part I can never forget that sight of the two bowed heads at which a mob of I know not how many hundreds crowded together in a narrow street hurled everything that they could find, round paving stones, sharp flints, broken bricks,

wooden logs, with every kind of execration that the worst and lowest of the people can invent. From the south and from the north: there was an equal shower; there was no difference.

For a whole hour this went on. The pillory should have been turned every quarter of an hour. But no one dared to mount the stage in order to turn it—besides, it was safer to let one side exhaust their artillery than to tempt the unspent stores of the other side.

At last the hour of twelve struck. There was a final discharge: then all stopped. The heads hung down inanimate, motionless. Had the mob, then, killed them both?

The under-sheriff mounted the stage: one of the constables cleared it of the miscellaneous stuff lying at the feet of the prisoners; then they took out the men. Both were senseless; they were carried down the steps and placed in the cart. The driver went to the horse's head; the constables closed in: the show was over.

In five minutes the whole crowd had dispersed; they had enjoyed the very rare chance of expressing their opinion upon a Thief-taker and an Attorney. They went off in great spirits, marching away in companies each in its own direction. Those from Clare Market, I observed, were headed by the music peculiar to that district played by eight butchers with marrow-bones and cleavers.

The horrid business over, I thought I would learn how the other two fared in Soho Square. The pillory was still standing when I got there, but the business of the day was over. From a gentleman who had been a spectator I learned that the two men were turned to the four quarters in the pillory, that their friends on the St. Giles's side would not pelt them; but that on the other three sides they received a liberal allowance of eggs and such harmless

gifts, together with a more severe expression of opinion in stones and brickbats. They were taken out wounded and bleeding, but they could walk down the ladder and were carried off in their right senses, at least.

I went on to Newgate. There I learned that the man Merridew was already dead: he was found dead in the cart when he was brought in. It was not wonderful. His skull was battered in; his cheek-bones were broken: his jaw was fractured: for the last half-hour it was thought he had been already senseless if not dead. The case of Mr. Probus was nearly as bad. He was breathing, they told me, and no more. It was doubtful if he would recover.

The Captain and the Bishop were, as I have said, more fortunate. They escaped with scars which would disfigure them for life. But they did escape, and since their master the Man-slayer was dead, they might begin again, once out of prison, with another rope much longer, perhaps, than the first.

I suppose they are long since hanged, both of them. No other lot was possible for them. I have not seen them or heard of them, since that day.

CHAPTER XXI.

'GUILTY, MY LORD.'

THE days slipped away. Visitors came, gazed, and departed. Our attorney exhorted Jenny every day to consider her decision and to prepare a defence.

'Consider, Madam,' he urged earnestly, 'you will stand before a Court already prepossessed, by the knowledge of your history, in your favour. There will be no pressure of

points against you. It will be shown, nay, it is already well known, that you have, by your own unaided efforts, defeated a most odious conspiracy and made it possible for the conspirators to be brought to justice. This fact, further, assigns reasons and motives for the persecution and the malignity of their friends. I am prepared to show that at the time when you are charged with receiving stolen property you were occupying a fine position; that you were solvent because you were receiving large sums of money: that you were the last person to be tempted even to receive stolen goods, especially those of a mean and worthless character. Those who might otherwise be ready to perjure themselves against you will be afraid to speak since this last business. You have this protection brought about by your own action. It will be impossible to prove that you had any knowledge of the property found on your premises.'

'All that is true. Yet, dear Sir, I cannot change my mind.'

'It is so true that I cannot believe it possible under the circumstances for a jury to convict: you are also, Madam, which is a very important feature in the case, possessed of a face and form whose loveliness alone proclaims your innocence.'

'Oh! Sir, if loveliness had aught to do with justice! But could I, even then, rely upon that claim?'

'Let me instruct Counsel. He will brush aside the evidence. Good Heavens! What evidence! A woman swears that she saw the property carried into your house during the whole of a certain night. That is quite possible. Certain shopkeepers have been found to swear to some of the articles found in your rooms as their own. How do they know? One bale of goods is like another. That kind of evidence is worth very little. But if the

things are theirs how are you to be connected with them? I shall prove that you lived in a great house with many servants: that it was quite easy to carry things in and out of that house without your knowledge: I shall call your servants, who will swear that they know nothing of any such conveyance of goods. I will prepare a defence for you in which you will state that you had no knowledge of these things: nor do you know when, or by whom, they were brought into the house: you will point to your troop of servants, including footmen, waiters, carvers, cooks, butlers and women of all kinds: you will ask if a manager of any place of entertainment is to be held responsible for what was brought under his roof—that you were not in want of money and that if you were the rubbish lying in your garrets would be of no use to you. And so on. There could not possibly be found a better defence.'

'I know one better still,' said Jenny quietly.

'Tell me what it is, then.'

'I have already told you. Once more then. My mother has long been notorious as a receiver of stolen goods. The people used to bring their plunder to the Black Jack by a back entrance: under the house there are stone vaults and a great deal of property can be stored there. When I understood that we should want the evidence of my mother I was obliged to offer her a large sum of money as a bribe before she would consent. When she found that I would give no more, she accepted my offer, but on conditions. 'Remember,' she said. 'None of us will ever be able to show our faces at the Black Jack any more. We should be murdered for sure, for going against our own people.'

'Well,' said Mr. Dewberry, 'doubtless she was right. But what were the conditions?'

'They were connected with the stolen goods. The vaults contained a great deal of property which could not be sold at once. If I would suffer her to store that property in my house, she would consent. Sir, at that time, and in order to defeat those villains, I would have consented to anything. It was agreed that my mother and sister should move the things by night after the Black Jack was shut up. I suppose the woman watched. So you see, unfortunately, I did consent without thinking.'

'You did consent—oh!' he groaned. 'But, after all, your mother and sister will not give evidence. Where is the evidence of your consent? Are they out of sight? Good. Let them keep out of sight.'

'But there is more. Dear Sir, you will say I am very imprudent. When it was arranged for my mother to go away after the trial and lie snug for awhile, she could not bear to think of losing all her property, and so—still without thinking of consequences—I bought the whole lot.'

'You bought! Oh! This, indeed, I did not expect. You bought the whole! However, one comfort, no one knows except your mother.'

'And my sister. Now, Sir, Doll will not allow my mother to suffer alone. If she is accused of receiving I shall be charged with buying the property.'

'I wish the mob had burned the place.'

'Nobody can wish that more than myself. Now consider. If I plead "Not Guilty" and am acquitted, my mother will certainly be arrested. There will be a Hue and Cry after her, and I shall then be charged again with buying stolen property, knowing it to be stolen. No, Sir, my mind is quite made up. I shall plead Guilty. If the evidence is only what we know, there will be no further inquiry after the property. So, at least, my mother will be safe.'

Mr. Dewberry said nothing for a while. 'Would your mother,' he asked, 'do as much for you?'

'I dare say she would. We have our virtues, we poor rogues, sometimes.'

He remonstrated with her: he repeated over and over again his assurance that her defence was as perfect as a defence could be. She could not be examined or cross-examined. The evidence of the woman would be confined to one point. It was all in vain: she was obstinate.

'I shall plead Guilty,' she said.

Finally he went away and left me alone with her.

'Jenny,' I said, 'sometimes I believe you are mad so far as your own interests are concerned.'

'No, Will—only crafty. Now listen a little. I have one firm, strong, powerful friend—I mean Lord Brockenhurst. If a woman wants a man to remain in love with her, she must keep him off. He knows all about me, he says: he has made up the prettiest tale possible. And he actually believes it.'

'Made up a tale, Jenny?'

'It was a very pretty story that he wrote called the "Case of Clarinda." This is a prettier story still. It appears that I am the lost and stolen child of noble parents. My birth is stamped upon my face. Never a gipsy yet was known to have light hair like mine, and blue eyes like mine. I have been brought up in ignorance of my parentage, by a woman of dishonest character who stole me in infancy. She made me, against my wish (for a person of my rank naturally loathes employment so menial), an Orange Girl of Drury Lane Theatre. Then I rose above that station by the possession of parts inherited, and became an actress and the Toast of the Town. The woman clung to her pretended daughter still. Then I left the stage in order to be married: when I found my husband

little better than a sordid gambler, I left his house and opened the Assembly-room: the woman, for her own safety, made, unknown to me, a storehouse of my garrets. That is his story. But the end is better still. My true nobility of soul, inherited from my unknown illustrious ancestors, prompts me to plead Guilty in order to save this pretended mother. Now, Will——'

'How does the story help?'

'Because it has already got abroad. Because it will incline everybody's heart to get me saved.'

'Yes—but an acquittal is so easy.'

'Will, you can never understand what it means to belong to such a family as mine. Suppose I get my acquittal. Then—afterwards——'

'What will follow afterwards?'

'Do you think that they will let me return to the stage? I must face the revenge of the family—the family of St. Giles. Through me the Bishop and the Captain have been put in pillory and are now in prison. They belong to the family—my family, and I have brought them to ruin—I myself. One of themselves. Can they forgive me? Nay, Will, I was brought up among them: it is their only point of honour. Can I expect them to forgive me? Never—until—unless——' She stopped and trembled.

'Unless—what?'

'Unless I pay for it, as I have made those two rogues pay for it. Unless I pass through the fiery furnace of trial and sentence, even if it leads me to the condemned cell. After that, Will, I may perhaps look for forgiveness.'

A man must be a stock or a stone not to be moved by such words as these. 'Oh, Jenny!' I said, 'you have brought all this upon yourself—for me.'

'Yes, Will, for you and for yours. I have counted the

cost. Your life is worth it all—and more. Don't think I never flinched. No. I had thoughts of letting everything go. Why should I imperil myself—my life—to defeat a villain? It was easy to do nothing. Then one night I saw a ghost—oh! a real ghost. It was Alice, and in her arms lay your boy.' Jenny rose slowly. The afternoon was turning into early evening: the cell was already in twilight. She rose, and gradually, so great is the power of an actress, that even though my eyes were overcast, I saw the narrow cell no longer. There was no Jenny. In her place stood another woman. It was Alice. In the arms of that spirit lay the semblance of a child. And the spirit spoke. It was the voice of Alice. 'Woman!' she said solemnly, 'give me back my husband. Give the boy the honour of his father. Murderess! Thou wouldst kill the father and ruin the son. There shall be no peace or rest or quiet for thee to the end. Save him—for thou must. Suffer and endure what follows. Thou shalt suffer, but thou shalt not be destroyed.' Alice spoke: it was as if she came there with intent to say those words. Then she vanished. And with a trembling of great fear, even as Saul trembled when he saw the spirit of Samuel, I saw Jenny standing in the place where Alice had been.

She fell into her chair: she burst into tears—the first and the last that ever I saw upon her cheek: she covered her face with her hands.

I soothed her, I assured her of all that I could say in gratitude infinite: perhaps I mingled my tears with hers.

'Oh, Will,' she cried. 'Do not vex yourself over the fate of an orange wench. What does it matter for such a creature as myself?'

The Old Bailey never witnessed a greater crowd than that which filled the court to witness the trial of Mistress Jenny Wilmot, charged with receiving stolen goods know-

ing them to be stolen. Her assumed name of Madame Vallance was forgotten: her married name of Halliday was forgotten: on everybody's tongue she was Jenny Wilmot the actress: Jenny Wilmot the Toast of the Town: Jenny Wilmot of Drury Lane. They spoke of her beauty, her grace, her vivacity: these were still remembered in spite of her absence from the stage of nearly two years. Now two years is a long time for an actress, unless she is very good indeed, to be remembered. But the 'Case of Clarinda' was by this time known to every club and coffee-house in London: not a City clerk or shopman but had the story pat, with oaths and sighs and tears. My Lord Brockenhurst had done his share in changing public opinion, and the later story, that of the noble origin of the stolen girl, was also whispered from mouth to mouth.

The court, I say, was crowded. Behind the chairs of the Lord Mayor and Judge, the Aldermen and the Sheriffs, were other chairs filled with great ladies: the public gallery was also filled with ladies who were admitted by tickets issued by sheriffs: the entrances and doorways and the body of the court were filled with gentlemen, actors and actresses mixed with an evil-looking and evil-smelling company from St. Giles's.

The witnesses, among whom I failed to observe the revengeful woman, consisted, I was pleased to see, of no more than the two or three shopkeepers who were waiting to swear to their own property. They stood beside the witness-box, wearing the look of determined and pleased revenge common to those who have been robbed. The Jury were sworn one after the other, and took their seats. I could not fail to observe that the unrelenting faces with which they had received me, the highwayman, were changed into faces of sweet commiseration. If ever Jury betrayed

by outward signs a full intention, beforehand, of bringing in a verdict of Not Guilty, with the addition, if the Judge would allow it, that the lady left the dock without a blemish upon her character, it was that jury—yet a jury composed entirely of persons engaged in trade, who would naturally be severe upon the crime of receiving stolen goods.

When the Court were ready to take their places the prisoner was brought in, and all the people murmured with astonishment and admiration and pity, for the prisoner was dressed as for her wedding day. She was all in white without a touch of any other colour. Her lovely fair hair was dressed without powder over a high cushion with white silk ribbons hanging to her shoulders: her white silk frock, drawn back in front, showed a white satin petticoat: white silk gloves covered her hands and arms: she carried a nosegay of white jonquils: a necklace of pearls hung round her neck: her belt was of worked silver. She took her place in the dock: she disposed her flowers between the spikes, among the sprigs of rue. Her air was calm and collected: not boastful: sad as was natural: resigned as was becoming: neither bold nor shrinking: there was no affectation of confidence nor any agitation of terror. She was like a Queen: she was full of dignity. She seemed to say, 'Look at me, all of you. Can you believe that I—I—I—such as I—Jenny Wilmot—could actually stoop to receive a lot of stolen rags and old petticoats and bales of stuff worth no more altogether than two or three guineas?'

During the whole time of the trial the eyes of everybody in court, I observed, were turned upon the prisoner. Never before, I am sure, did a more lovely prisoner stand in the Dock: never was there one whose position was more commiserated: they were all, I verily believe, ready

to set her free at once: but for the act and deed of the prisoner herself. Her attitude: her face: her dress all proclaimed aloud the words which I have written down above. Everybody had seen her on the stage playing principally the coquette, the woman of fashion and folly, the hoyden, the affected prude—but not a part like this. 'Ye gods!' I heard a young barrister exclaim. 'She looks like an angel: an angel sent down to Newgate!' The strange, new, unexpected look of virginal innocence stamped on the brow of the once daring and headlong actress startled the people: it went to the heart of everyone: it made everybody present feel that they were assisting at a martyrdom: nay, as if they were themselves, unwillingly, bringing faggots to pile the fire. Before the trial began many an eye was dim, many a cheek was humid.

The Court entered: the people rose: the Counsel bowed to the Bench: the Lord Mayor took his seat: beside him the Judge: with him the Aldermen and the Sheriffs: the prisoner also did reverence to the Court like a gentlewoman receiving company. One would not have been surprised had my Lord Mayor stepped down and kissed her on the cheek in City fashion. But neither in her look nor in her actions was there betrayed the least sign of degradation, fear, or shame.

When a somewhat lengthy indictment had been read, she raised her head. 'My Lord, I would first desire to ask for my name to be amended.'

'What amendment do you desire?'

'I am described as Madame Vallance, alias Jenny Wilmot, actress. It is true that Jenny Wilmot was my maiden name, and that I assumed the name of Madame Vallance when I left the stage and opened the Assembly Rooms. My true name is Jenny Halliday, and I am the

wife of Mr. Matthew Halliday, son of Mr. Paul Halliday, Alderman, and partner in the House of Halliday Brothers, West India Wharf, by the Steel Yard in the Parish of All Hallows the Great.'

The Judge, whom nothing could surprise, answered with the awful coldness which becomes a Judge and so terrifies a prisoner. 'There is no dispute concerning identity. Plead in your married name, if you will.'

'Then, my Lord, I plead Guilty.'

She had done it, then. With a case so strong: with an assurance of acquittal, she had pleaded Guilty. My heart sank. Yet I knew what she would do. The Lord Mayor whispered the Judge again.

'You are ignorant of law and procedure in Courts of Justice,' he said. 'I will allow you to withdraw that plea. Have you no Counsel?'

'I need none, my Lord. I plead Guilty.'

The people all held their breath. Then the 'Case of Clarinda' was true after all.

'I am anxious,' the Judge went on, 'that you should have a fair trial. Appoint a Counsel. Advise with him.'

'I plead Guilty,' she repeated.

The Judge threw himself back in his seat. 'Let the trial proceed,' he said.

The Counsel for the Prosecution opened the case. It was, he said, a remarkable case, because there seemed no sufficient reason or temptation for breaking the law, or for receiving stolen property. The information was laid by a woman living in the purlieus of St. Giles's Parish: she was, very probably, a person of no character at all: but character was not wanted in this case because her information would be supplemented by the evidence of several persons of the highest respectability who would swear to certain articles as their own property. The woman, in fact, would depose

to the conveyance of stolen goods to the house in question: she gave information the goods were actually found there; and other witnesses would claim as their own many things among the property so found.

'Gentlemen of the Jury,' he went on, 'this is a case of a painful nature. The prisoner, who pleads guilty—who rejects the clemency—the kindly benevolence—of the Court—is a person who, as you know, a year or two ago was delighting the town by the vivacity of her acting and the beauty of her person: she left the stage, the world knew not why, or what had become of her: it now appears that she took a certain house in Soho Square, where she carried on assemblies, masquerades, and other amusements, still delighting the town: there is nothing to make one believe that she was in pecuniary embarrassments: and we now learn that she is actually the wife of a City merchant of great wealth and reputation.' Here his neighbour hurriedly wrote something on a paper: and handed it to him. 'My learned friend,' he said, correcting himself, 'informs me that this House, until recently in the highest repute, has fallen into evil times and is now bankrupt. But, gentlemen, whether the prisoner attempted to stave off her husband's bankruptcy or not, the property which she received was of so trifling a character that it would seem as if she was breaking the Law for the sake of a few shillings. The things found in her possession were not those which we are accustomed to regard as the booty of robbers: there are no jewels, gold chains, silver cups, lace, silks or anything at all, but things belonging to poor people or to people just raised above poverty. There are women's petticoats, men's nightcaps: watches in tortoise-shell cases: knives and forks: small spoons, handkerchiefs: stockings, even: wigs, and so forth. I expected, I confess, when I surveyed this rubbish, to hear a defence on the

ground that such a person in a position so responsible—with friends so numerous, some of them of high rank, could not condescend to countenance the mean and sordid traffic. I confess that I looked forward to this trial as a means of finding out the real criminals who had taken advantage of access to the house and impudently used the rooms in Madame Vallance's premises for their own dishonest purposes. That expectation must be now disappointed: that hope must be abandoned. By her own repeated confession, the prisoner has assured the Court that she is guilty.

'The case,' he went on, 'has grown out of one recently heard before this Court. It was one in which the present prisoner exerted herself very actively in the cause of a man named Halliday, presumably a connection of her own by marriage. Halliday was charged with highway robbery. The evidence was clear and direct. The prisoner before us, however, with great activity and courage, brought together an overwhelming mass of evidence which proved that the charge was a conspiracy of the blackest and foulest kind. The conspirators are now undergoing their sentence. By this brave action an innocent life was saved and four villains were sent to prison. I mention the fact because it shows that the prisoner possesses many noble qualities, which make it the more marvellous that she should be guilty of acts so mean, so paltry, so sordid. The woman who will appear before you was the mistress of one of these conspirators. Her information was doubtless laid as an act of revenge. Yet we cannot weigh motives.' And so on.

It appeared that the evidence was of a merely formal character and that the witnesses would not be cross-examined. The first witness was the woman of whom you know. She, among other women prisoners in New-

gate, had been kept from starvation by Jenny; this fact might have softened her heart: but unfortunately the recent sufferings of her lover in pillory re-awakened her desire for revenge. She was an eager witness: she wanted to begin at once and to tell her tale her own way. The main point now was a statement invented since her evidence before the magistrate. She now declared that she herself was engaged by the prisoner to carry the property to the Assembly Rooms. This abominable perjury she stoutly maintained. The Counsel for the Prosecution questioned her apparently in order to elicit the facts: in reality, as I now believe, in order to make her contradict herself. She was asked where she put the things: why in the garret: what servants helped her: who received her: who carried candles for her: why the prisoner selected her for the job: what share she had in the riots: whether she was in prison on that account: and so on. She was a poor ignorant creature, thirsting for revenge: therefore she maintained stoutly that the prisoner had paid her for moving the goods into her house.

Whether by accident or design, nothing was said about the Black Jack or about the landlady of that establishment. I suppose that the Prosecution was only anxious to establish the bare facts to which the prisoner had pleaded Guilty.

The manner in which the witness gave her evidence the fire in her eyes and in her cheeks: the dirty slovenly look of the woman: her uncombed hair: her voice: her gestures: her manifest perjuries and contradictions: disgusted all who looked on: the Judge laid down his pen and leaned back in his chair as if what she said was of no concern: the Aldermen looked at the Judge as much as to ask how long this was to be permitted: the Jury whispered and shook their heads: the ladies present knotted their

brows and fanned themselves and whispered each other angrily. At last she sat down, flaming and vehement to the end. Her evidence had in fact ruined the case. Why, she had the impudence to allege that the property she had herself carried to the house was received by Madame herself, who ordered her footmen to carry it to the garrets.

She was followed by the shopkeepers who had been robbed. They swore to certain goods of no great value, which had been stolen from them. Their evidence was quickly given. There was, in fact, no evidence really implicating the prisoner except that of the woman. There was clearly something behind: something not explained, which everybody was whispering to each other—it had been revealed in the famous paper called 'The Case of Clarinda.' And now I understood what Jenny meant when she said that her defence would bring her mother into the business. For Counsel would have inquired into the Black Jack story and asked what the things were doing there: how they came there: who was the landlord: with many other particulars, some of which would have brought out the truth. As for the woman, whether by feminine cunning or by accident, she concealed the relationship between Jenny and the Black Jack · she had really seen the sister and the mother carrying things to the house in Soho Square: she did not then know that Madame Vallance was Jenny: she found out the fact at the trial: she then invented the story of being hired for carrying the property *because she knew it was there.* All that the Court knew, however, was the fact that such a woman as stood before them, this angel of loveliness: this woman of position: had actually confessed to the crime of receiving the miserable odds and ends—the rags and tawdry finery—stolen from quite poor people. It was amazing: it was incredible.

'That is my case, my Lord,' said the Counsel with a sigh, as if he was ashamed of having conducted it at all.

The Judge summed up in a few words. The verdict of the Jury included a recommendation to mercy.

'Prisoner at the Bar,' said the Judge, 'you have heard the verdict of the Jury. You may now say anything you wish in explanation or extenuation.'

'What can I have to say, my Lord,' she replied simply but with dignity, 'since I pleaded guilty? Nevertheless, I have to thank the Counsel for the Prosecution, who almost proved my pleading impossible.'

The Judge assumed the black cap: he pronounced sentence of Death: the Ordinary appeared in his robes and prayed that the Lord would have mercy on her soul: the warder tied the usual slip of string about the prisoner's thumb to show what hanging meant. The only person unaffected by the sentence was the prisoner herself. Never before had she acted so finely: never before, indeed, had Jenny been called upon to play such a part. She stood with clasped hands gazing into the face of the Judge, not with defiance, not with wonder: not with resentment: but with a meek acceptance. The women in the court, the great ladies behind the Lord Mayor, wept and sobbed without restraint: even the younger members of the Outer Bar were affected to unmanly humidity of the eyes.

Now when the verdict of the Jury was pronounced, and before the sentence of the Judge, Jenny did a strange thing, which moved the people almost more than the words of the sentence. She took up a small roll which lay before her. It was a black lace veil. She threw this over her head: it fell down upon her shoulders nearly to her waist. She held it up while the Judge was speaking: when he finished she dropped it over her face. So with the veil of Death falling over her spotless robes of Innocence she

stepped down from the dock and followed the men in blue back to the prison. 'Ye Gods!' cried one of the barristers, 'she is nothing less than the Virgin Martyr!' Indeed she seemed nothing less than one of the Christian martyrs, the confessors faithful to the end whom no tortures and no punishment could turn aside from the path of martyrdom.

I hurried round to the prison. 'Ah! Sir,' sighed a turnkey, 'she must now go to the condemned cell. Pity! Pity!' They were all her friends—every one of these officers, hardened by years of daily contact with the scum of the people. 'But they won't hang her. They can't.'

'And all for her mother,' said another. 'I remember old Sal of the Black Jack, also her sister Dolly. All to save that fat old carrion carcass. Well, well. You can go in, sir.'

Jenny was standing by the table. She greeted me with a sad smile. 'It is all over at last,' she said. 'It is harder to play a part on a real stage than in a theatre. Did I play well, Will?'

'You left a House in tears, Jenny. Oh!' I cried impatiently, 'Is this what you wanted?'

'Yes, I am quite satisfied. I really was afraid at one time that the Counsel would throw up the case because his leading witness was so gross and impudent a liar. Didst ever hear a woman perjure herself so roundly and so often? What next?'

'Yes, Jenny. What next?'

'I don't know, Will. The Assembly Rooms which are taken in my name are seized, I hear, by my husband's creditors. But all the furniture and fittings have been destroyed already. That is done with, then. Am I to begin again in order to have everything seized again?' She talked as if her immediate enlargement was certain. I could not have the heart to whisper discouragement.

'There is still the stage, Jenny. The world will welcome you back again.'

'Do you think so? The Orange Girl they could stand; it pleased the Pit to remember how they used to buy my oranges. But the woman who has come out of a condemned cell? The woman who pleaded guilty to receiving stolen goods? I doubt it, Will.'

'What does that matter? Everybody knows why you pleaded Guilty. You are Clarinda.'

'An audience at a theatre, Will, sometimes shows neither pity nor consideration for an actress. They say what they like: they shout what they like: they insult her as they please—an actress is fair game: to make an actress run off the stage in a flood of tears is what they delight in. They would be pleased to ask what I have done with the stolen goods.'

'What will you do then, Jenny?'

There came along, at this point, another visitor. It was none other than the Counsel for the Prosecution. He stood at the door of the cell, but seeing me, he hesitated.

'Come in, Sir,' said Jenny. 'You wish to speak to me. Speak. This gentleman, my husband's first cousin, can hear all that you have to ask or I to reply.'

'Madam,' he bowed as to a Countess. 'This is a wretched place for you. I trust, however, that it will not be for long. The recommendation of the Jury will certainly have weight: the Judge is benevolently disposed: you have many friends.'

'I hope, Sir, that I have some friends who will not believe that I have bought a parcel of stolen petticoats.'

'Your friends will stand by you: of that I am certain. Madam, I venture here to ask you, if I may do so without the charge of impertinent curiosity—believe me—I am not so actuated——'

'Surely, Sir. Ask what you will.'

'I would ask you, then, why you pleaded Guilty. The case was certain from the outset to break down. I might have pressed the witness as to the property itself, but I refrained because her perjuries were manifest. Why then, Madam—if I may ask—why?'

'Perhaps I had learned that certain things had been sent to my garrets, but I paid no thought to any risk or danger——'

'That might have been pleaded.'

'The case being over, that property can bring no other person into trouble, I believe?'

'I should think not. The case is ended.'

'Then, Sir, I pray you to consider this question. If some person very closely connected with yourself were actually guilty of this crime: if you yourself were charged with it: if your acquittal would lead to that person's conviction, what would you do?'

'That is what they whisper,' he replied. 'Madam, I hope that such a choice may never be made to me. Is this true—what you suggest—what people whisper?'

'Many things are whispered concerning me,' said Jenny proudly. 'I do not heed those whispers. Well, Sir, such a choice has been presented to me. It is part of the penalty of my birth that such a choice could be possible.'

'Then it is true?' he insisted; 'the "Case of Clarinda" is true?'

'Sir, it is true in many points. I was once an Orange Girl of Drury Lane. My people were residents of St. Giles's in the Fields. I was brought up in the courts and lanes of that quarter. You, Sir, are a lawyer. Need I explain further the nature of that choice?'

'Madam,' said the lawyer, 'I think you are the best

woman in the world, as you are the loveliest.' So saying he lifted her hand to his lips, bowing low, and left us.

'Well,' said Jenny, 'I think I have done pretty well for my mother and for Doll. Their slate is clean again. They can begin fair. Receiving has been her principal trade so long that she is not likely to be satisfied with drawing beer. But the past is wiped out. And as for myself——' She sighed. 'What next? Merridew, poor wretch! is where the wicked can no longer trouble. My friends of St. Giles's will be satisfied because I have now done what I told you I should do, and gone through the fiery furnace. Why,' she looked around the bare and narrow walls, 'I believe I am in it still. But the flames do not burn, nor does the hot air scorch—believe me, dear Will—oh! believe me—I would do it all again—all again—I regret nothing—Will, nothing. Assure Alice that I would do it all again—exactly as I have done.'

With a full heart I left her. What next? What next?

CHAPTER XXII.

FROM THE CONDEMNED CELL.

And now, indeed, began the time of endurance and suspense. To the bravest of women came moments of depression—what else could be expected when her days and nights were spent in a condemned cell? In this gloomy apartment Jenny was now compelled to live. The place lies in a corner of the women's yard or Court; it contains two rooms, one of them a small bedroom, the other, when there are only one or two in residence, a living room. One other prisoner was already in this

cell, awaiting her time for execution. Alas! she was a mere child, not more than sixteen, and looking younger: a poor, ignorant creature who had never learned the difference between right and wrong: who had been brought up, as was Jenny herself, among children of rogues, themselves rogues from infancy. The law was going to kill this child because the law itself had found no way to protect her. Alas for our humanity! Alas for our statesmen! Alas for our Church! Will there never arise a Prophet in the land to show us how much better it is to teach than to kill?

Outside, the yard was all day long filled with women either convicted or waiting to be tried: some of them were in prison for short sentences: some were waiting to be whipped: some were waiting for ships to carry them to the plantations: all alike were foul in language; unwashed, uncombed and draggled; rough and coarse and common. Such women, gathered together in one place, make each other worse: they swear like men: they fight like men: they drink like men: their hair hangs loose over their shoulders: the 'loose jumps' of leather which they use for stays are never changed: the ragged kerchief over their shoulders is never washed: the linsey-woolsey frock is foul with every kind of stain: their loud harsh voices have no feminine softness: their red brawny arms terrify the spectator: in their faces, even of the youngest, is no look of Venus.

Taken to this place, Jenny had to wait, expectant, for the relief that was promised her by Lord Brockenhurst. Her cheek grew pale and thin: her eyes became unnaturally bright: I feared gaol fever, but happily she was spared this dreadful malady. Yet she kept up the appearance of cheerfulness, and greeted me every day with a smile that was never forced, and a grasp that was never chilled.

For exercise Jenny had the crowded yard. There, with no one to protect her, she walked a little every morning, the women falling back, right and left, to let her pass. They offered her no molestation. To save her fancy man —so ran the legend—she had compassed the ruin of her old friends: with this object ('twas the only one they could understand) she put up her mother to bear witness against her own customers. Well: it was to save her fancy man—the same came every day to see her in the prison: that was some excuse for her: would not any woman do as much for her man? And now she was herself condemned all through the other woman whose man she had put in prison and in pillory. So far, then, they were quits, and might all become friends again. And they remembered as a point in Jenny's favour that the noble welcome with which the thief-taker was received—a thing at which all Roguery rejoiced—was entirely due to her exertions. These things passed from one to the other clothed in the language peculiar to such people.

Jenny took two or three turns in the yard every morning, when the prison air is freshest, and then went back to her cell, where she remained for the rest of the day.

In those days she talked to me more freely than before and a great deal about herself. She was forced to talk and to think about herself, for the first time in her life. Her thoughts went back to the past when all she could expect was to become such as the poor creatures with her in the prison. Yet these poor women, whom I found so terrible to look upon and to hear, she regarded with a tenderness which I thought excessive. I now understand that it was more humane than at that time was within my comprehension.

'They are not terrible to me,' she said. 'I know them —what they are and what has made them so. I can speak their language, but I must not let them know that I

understand. It is the Thieves' tongue made up of Gipsy and of Tinkers' talk. They talk about me all day—even when I am in their midst. Poor wretches! They are not so bad as they look.'

'Nay, Jenny, but to see them beside you!'

'If we grow up among people, Will, and are used to them, we do not think much of their manners and their looks. When I was a child I played among them. Many a cuff have I had: many a slap for getting in their way: but many a bit of gingerbread and many an apple. You think them terrible. If they were clean and had their hair dressed they would not be terrible any longer. Oh! Will, they are not very far from the fine ladies—no—nor so very much below the best of good women, even Alice. They are women, though you flog them at Bridewell and hang them at Tyburn—they are still women. And they love—in their poor fond faithful way—the very hand that knocks them down and the very foot that kicks them. They love—Oh! the poor women—they love.'

She broke off, with a sob in her voice. I marvelled at the time because I had always looked upon the creatures as something below humanity: as belonging to a tribe of savages such as Swift called the Yahoos. Afterwards, I understood; and then I marvelled more.

Another time she talked about her profession as an actress. 'Acting,' she said, 'cannot be otherwise than delightful—but it takes an actor away from himself. When one has been two or three years on the stage nothing is left but the stage and the dressing-room: the company behind the scenes and the audience in front. Nothing is real. Everything that happens is but a scene in a play. When the curtain drops upon this Act, that is, when they let me go, I shall rest for five minutes while the next Act is getting ready: the Play of *Clarinda*, or the

Orange Girl, has some excellent scenes. You remember that scene when the mob wrecked the house: and the scene when the mob pelted Mr. Merridew—well, I should not be in the least surprised to meet Mr. Merridew himself walking along Holborn with one eye on a young thief in training for a shoplifter: and I might look in at the Black Jack and see my mother taking her morning dram and Doll adding up the scores upon the slate. In five minutes after the curtain has dropped what has happened is little more to me than the last scene in the play at Drury. Why, if I were put into the cart and carried out to Tyburn I should still be the heroine playing my part to a breathless house. And I believe I should enjoy that part of the performance as much as anything. You saw how I played the Virgin Martyr in Court.'

'Yet this is real enough, God knows,' I said, looking round the place.

'I dare say it looks so to you. To me, it is part of the Play. Will, the Play is nearly over. I knew all along that disaster was coming upon me. But the worst is over —the worst is over. I know that the worst is over. I can now foretell what is coming next.' She looked straight before her, her eyes luminous in the dark cell. 'I can see,' she said, 'a time of peace and calm. Well, Will, reality or not, that scene will be pleasant. I shall go out of this place very soon—But I know not when, and I cannot see myself at any time again upon the boards of Drury. I am certain that I shall never go back there. I cannot see myself in Soho Square either. I shall never go back there. I see fields and hills and woods'—she shuddered and with a gesture pushed the vision from her. 'Will—it is strange, all is strange: it is a beautiful country, but I know it not —I cannot understand it.'

It was not the first time, as you have seen, that she

showed this strange power of peering into the future. Whether this fair-haired and blue-eyed woman was really a child of the gipsies, or, as Lord Brockenhurst conjectured, a stolen child, she had the powers that we commonly find in gipsy women, who are fortune-tellers all the world over. That she compelled all men to become her servants you have seen: that she could also compel women to follow and obey her was proved by what she did during that three or four weeks which she spent in the condemned cell: the same magic arts—yet she was no witch: and she could read the future—a gift which is marvellous in our eyes.

Her power over others, even the most savage people, was shown by the changed behaviour of the poor girl waiting for execution. I have mentioned her: she was at first a wild creature: she fled to the darkest corner of the cell and there crouched with eyes of suspicion and terror: she snatched her food and ran into her corner to eat it: she was altogether unwashed and altogether in rags: she was bare-footed, bare-legged and bare-armed: her hair, which should have been light, like Jenny's own hair, was matted with dirt: it looked as if it had never known a comb: yet long and beautiful hair: her eyes were blue, large and limpid. She had never known kindness, or love, or care since the day when her mother was marched away to Newgate wearing handcuffs. She was, I say, a mere savage. The child might have been sixteen, but she looked thirteen. Still, sixteen is young for Tyburn. Jenny found this child in her cell: condemned like herself; and she tamed her. Not in a single day, but in a few days. She tamed her with kindness; with soft words in the language which the child understood best: with soft touches: with gifts of pretty things: I suppose she gave her sweetmeats—I know not what she did, but in a few days I found the savage wild creature converted into

a shy, timid girl—clinging to Jenny and following her about like a favourite spaniel. She was washed and combed and dressed from head to foot: she wore stockings and shoes: her hair, just confined by a ribbon, hung over her shoulders in lovely tresses: she had become an interesting child who promised to grow into a lovely maiden. And yet she was to be carried out to Tyburn and there hanged.

Then, when the girl had assumed a civilized look, Jenny began to lament her approaching fate, of which the poor creature seemed herself unconscious. Indeed, I think the child understood nothing at her trial or her sentence except that she was horribly frightened and was carried out of court crying.

'Is it not terrible,' she asked, 'that we must hang children—ignorant children?'

'It is the law of the land, Jenny. Judges have only to administer the law of the land.'

'Then it is a cruel law, and the Judges ought to say so. A man is a murderer who condemns a child to death, even if it is the law, without declaring against it.'

'Nay, Jenny'—this she could not understand for the reasons I have already given—'we must remember that the children suffer for the sins of the fathers, unto the third and fourth generation.'

She stared. 'Why,' she said, 'the poor child has been taught no better.' And, indeed, there seems no answer to this plea. If in the mysteries of Providence we must so suffer, the Law of men should not punish ignorance. 'To hang children!' she insisted. 'To destroy their lives before they have well begun! And for what? For taking something not their own—Oh! Will, it is monstrous. Just for a bit of cloth—only a bit of cloth off a counter. Oh! the poor child! the poor child!'

Then, just as she had spared no trouble to get me out of my danger, so she now began to work for the rescue of this child. She spoke to the Governor about it. He looked astonished: children of fifteen, or so, were frequently executed for one offence or the other: the Law was doubtless severe: but criminals of all kinds were multiplying: after all, they were out of the way when they were hanged: this girl, for instance, would only grow up like the rest, a plague and a curse to the community. Still he gave Jenny advice, and by her instruction I drew up a Petition from the child herself, addressed to no less a person than her Gracious Majesty the young Queen, who was said to have a kindly heart. The petition, with certain changes, might almost have been that of Jenny herself for her own case. Here is a piece of it.

'Your Petitioner humbly submits that she was born and brought up in a part of London occupied entirely by thieves, rogues, and vagabonds: that she was taught from infancy that the only way by which she could earn her daily bread was by stealing: that the only art or trade she had ever learned was that of stealing without being detected: that she was never at any school or Church or under any kind of instruction whatever: that she was never taught the meaning of right or wrong: that she had learned no religion and no morals and knew not what they meant; and that being caught in the act of stealing a piece of cloth value six shillings from a shop, she is now lying under sentence of death.'

To make a long story short, Jenny entrusted this Petition to Lord Brockenhurst, who generously interested himself in the girl and undertook that the Petition should reach the hands of Her Majesty the Queen—with the result, as you shall presently hear, that the girl's life was spared.

This incident has nothing to do with the story, save that it shows Jenny's generous nature and her good heart; thus in the midst of her own anxieties to think of the troubles of others. Nay, she not only saved the life of this girl, but she brought her to a new mind and to new thoughts: and, whereas she had been before what you have seen, she converted the child into a decent, well conducted civil girl, worthy of better things—even to marry an honest man and to become the mother of stout lads and sturdy wenches. Let us consider how many lives might have been destroyed had they hanged this young girl. I have sometimes calculated that if they hang a hundred women every year, most of them young, they deprive the country of five hundred children whose loss may mean the loss of two thousand five hundred grandchildren, and so on. Can any country afford to lose so many valuable soldiers and sailors every year, the number still mounting up? Why, then, cannot we take the children when they are still young out of Roguery and place them in some house where they will be taught religion and morals and a craft? At present the cry is all 'Hang! Hang! Hang!' or 'Flog! Flog! Flog!' So the soldiers and the sailors and the wretched women are tied up and flogged well nigh to death: and the carts go rumbling along Holborn loaded with the poor creatures on their way to be hanged: but the rogues increase and multiply. Since hanging and flogging do no good, cannot we try Jenny's method of kindness? I say this writing many years afterwards—because at that time I did not understand the law of kindness which I now perceive to be the Heavenly Law of Charity. Jenny, who had no glimmer of religion, poor thing, in her quick way divined the Law of Charity.

Why, she changed even the women in the Prison Yard.

There was great suffering among them. Many of them had no friends to bring them food: they had nothing but the daily dole of the penny loaf. Presently, I observed that they looked more contented and better fed: they were less noisy: there was less quarrelling and fighting: they were even cleaner to look at. All this was Jenny's doing. She fed them first: then when their craving for food, which made them quarrelsome, was allayed, she went among them and talked to them one at a time. I have seen her, I have seen how the rough coarse common creatures would respond, little by little, to words of kindness. She advised them about their affairs: she made them confess what they had done: why, was she not one of themselves?

'I knew you,' she said to one, 'long ago in Hog's Lane: you lived in the Old Bell Alley: we were girls together. Come into my cell and I will find you something more to put on; and your hair wants to be combed and put up, doesn't it? And your face would look so much better if it were washed. Come with me——' and so on with one after the other: not the least case being the girl who had laid information and committed perjury against her. It was what Jenny said—though the saying was then too hard for me. They are women: as are all men and women, whether we call some Yahoos or not: they are women: there is not such very great difference between the greatest lady and the lowest woman: both are women: both are ruled by the same irresistible forces of love. Some day, perhaps, some gentlewoman will put the part of the Christian religion—I mean the Law of Charity—into practice. It is strange that a woman who was not a Christian, and had no religion, should first teach me that Charity means more than the giving of alms.

'Let me,' said Jenny, 'do something for these poor creatures while I am among them. That will not be for

long. Then they will fall back again into their own ways.'

'But, Jenny, you are spending all your money.'

'An actress never wants money. When I get out of this place I have made up my mind what to do. I will not return to Drury Lane: I will go over to Dublin. That is the strange country with hills and woods which I see before me always. It is Ireland. I will go on the Dublin stage. As for the money, I brought with me all there was in the house when I left it: and all my jewels—but they are not worth much. These women have had some of the money, and the turnkeys have had some, and Mr. Dewberry has had some: and I think there is not much left.'

The question of money pressed hard because I had none, and as yet no new situation, and when Jenny was released she would certainly want money to carry her on.

She laughed, seeing my seriousness. 'Oh! Will—Will,' she said. 'You are a musician and yet you are anxious about money. But you were born in the City. Now in a theatre nobody thinks about money. When the money is plenty it is freely lent: when there is none it is freely borrowed. Believe me, Will, I shall want no money: I never have wanted money. Did I ever tell you, Will, my own fortune? An old gipsy woman told me. "What others envy she shall have: what she would have she shall lack. She shall pass through dangers without harm: she shall be happy in the end. Yet not in the way she would most desire." That is a strange fortune, is it not? Now I am in the midst of dangers, yet nothing will do me harm. What do I most desire? What do all women most desire? You were born in the City, Will, where they do not study the human heart. Therefore you know not. The old woman was a witch, as they all

are—all the gipsy women—so far I have had what others envy—and—alas! Will, I still lack what most I desire.'

'What is it, Jenny?'

'Ask your violin, Will. Ask your music. Ask the play upon the stage what women most desire. Oh! Foolish youth! they ask what you have given to Alice—they ask the happiness of love.'

If the time was long to those who watched and waited, it was worse for her who suffered. I believe if I remember aright that our poor Jenny spent five or perhaps six weeks in that noisome cell; her cheek, as I have said, grew thin and pale from the bad air and the confinement; but her courage she never lost for a single day. She asked for no consolations and desired no soothing to alleviate the weariness of her prison. Of those fine ladies who called before she was tried not one came now: nor did any of the actresses, her old friends and rivals, visit her. They came before the trial, just as they visit a notorious robber, because it is interesting to gape upon a person who stands in the great danger of a trial for his life, or has done some daring act of villainy, or is about to undergo some terrible ordeal. When her trial was over and it became certain in everybody's mind that, although the woman had pleaded guilty: although she was condemned: she would not suffer the capital sentence, the interest of the public in the case rapidly declined and in a few days ceased wholly: the great ladies ran after other excitements: they sent letters to the new singer: they sent rings to their favourite actor: they crowded the prison of the fashionable highwaymen: the actresses, for their part, reflected that they would probably have Jenny back among them before long casting them all in the shade: so they left off calling: the portrait painters went elsewhere after studies likely to be popular. Truly it was a lamentable instance of the breath

of popular favour, fickle and uncertain. 'The Case of Clarinda' was forgotten as soon as people had made up their minds that Clarinda was not to be hanged, although she had screened her mother and pleaded guilty and received sentence of death.

The only persons who now came to the cell were Lord Brockenhurst and Mr. Dewberry the attorney, not to speak of the Governor of the Prison, who came daily to ask after his fair prisoner's health. His Lordship let us know day by day concerning the efforts being made on Jenny's behalf. The reason why they were so slow was partly due to a feeling on the part of the Judge that though the motive of the prisoner might be good she had confessed to a heinous crime, and the Law must not be made ridiculous. Therefore, a few weeks of prison should be allowed, whatever was done afterwards, in vindication of the Majesty of the Law. 'But,' said Lord Brockenhurst, 'he is at least on your side. So much I know for a fact. It is a great thing to have the Judge on your side.' He also told us that the Counsel for the Prosecution, a gentleman of great eminence in the Law, was also very active on our behalf: that the Jurymen had drawn up a petition and signed it unanimously for Jenny's pardon and release: that the Queen was also reported to be interested in the case and in favour of clemency, the whole circumstances being so unusual and the behaviour of the prisoner so strangely actuated by filial affection even towards an unworthy object: and that the general opinion of the people was that it was impossible to suppose that a woman in Jenny's position, commanding receipts of thousands every night of a masquerade, could condescend to so low and miserable a business as receiving a bundle of stolen goods, not worth a couple of guineas altogether, with the assistance of wretched confederates whose evidence might hang her:

and further that the minds of the people being made up they thought no more about the matter. In a word, that all was going well, but we must wait: he could not tell us how long, and possess our souls in patience.

'If only we do not die of gaol-fever,' Jenny sighed. 'Faugh! To die in the reek and the stench of this place. My Lord, I am always your most obliged servant. Perhaps the Judge would consider his opinion and give me at least the choice of death. Let me die like my own people. They lie down in a little tent which keeps off the cold rain and the hot sun: on their backs they lie looking through the open front at the sky and the clouds and presently they shut their eyes and their limbs grow cold. Then they are buried in the hedge without coffin or winding-sheet.'

'And without prayers,' said his Lordship. 'Dear Madame, they are not your people. There was never yet gipsy with fair hair and blue eyes. You shall not die in a tent, but in a bed with those who love you weeping over you. And you shall be borne to a marble tomb in the Church with the singing men and the boys chanting the service for the good of your soul.'

The doctrine was unsound, but the meaning of his Lordship was good.

'The good of my soul,' Jenny repeated doubtfully. 'Well, my Lord, I have at least learned something from the people who stole me—if they did steal me. I love the light and the sunshine and the wind. Restore me to these and I will promise never, never, never to have another mother who will tempt me with second-hand petticoats.'

She laughed, but Lord Brockenhurst, who was a grave gentleman, did not laugh.

'Madame,' he said, kissing her fingers—of which he never seemed to weary—'I should desire nothing better than to

lead you into meadows and beside gentle streams where the Zephyrs would bring back their rosy hue to your pale cheeks. We must not speak of death, but of life.'

'But not of love, my Lord,' she interrupted. 'Remember I have a husband. He is in the King's Bench Prison, a bankrupt, there to remain for life, because he can never hope to pay his debts. But he is my husband.'

'Of everything but love, Madame,' he replied with the dignity which sat upon him as naturally as grace sat upon Jenny. 'Seriously, I have a house some fifty miles from here. It stands among deep woods, beside a flowing stream: behind it is a hill, not terrible with crags but of a gentle ascent: it has gardens and orchards: around is a park with flocks of the timid deer: not far off you may discover the tower of a village Church and hear the music of the bells. Thither, thither, Madame, I will lead you when you are free from the misery of this place, and there you shall stay till your spirits are restored and your mind recreated: nay, you shall stay there, if you will so honour me, all your life. The house and all that belongs to it shall be your own. I will be content if once in a while I may spend a day or two with you, as your honoured guest.'

'Oh! my Lord,' Jenny made reply, through her tears, 'you are too good to me. Indeed I deserve none of this kindness.'

'You deserve all—all—divine Jenny—that a man can offer. Believe me there is nothing that is too good or too great for such as Jenny Wilmot.'

This dialogue was only one of many. Truly, as Jenny said, here was a faithful and a loyal friend.

One more friend was found, as faithful and as loyal, but more humble. You remember the country lad called Jack, who had fallen into Merridew's clutches and had already entered under his guidance upon the career of a rogue.

He it was who gave evidence which helped to connect all four plotters with the plot. He it was, also, who carried off the old woman and Doll by the waggon to Horsham in Sussex. We thought no more about him. He had done his service and had received his pay and had gone his own way. The lad had an honest look—a wholesome country-bred face, different from the pale cheeks of the boys and the swollen faces of the men with whom he had begun to sit. In a word, he was not yet branded with the mark of Cain. But, I say, we had forgotten him. He was one of the characters in the last scene but one of the play which we were performing with Miss Jenny Wilmot of Drury Lane Theatre as the heroine.

Now, one morning, while I was playing something to please our prisoner in her cell the turnkey brought us a visitor. It was none other than the country lad. He stood at the open door and pulled his hair, holding his hat in one hand.

'Your servant to command, Madame,' he said timidly, pronouncing his words in the broad country manner which is too uncouth to be presented to eyes polite.

'Why,' cried Jenny, 'it is Jack! How fares it, honest Jack?' and so took him by the hand as if he was of her station. Jenny had no sense of what is due to rank and station. 'Why,' she said, when I spoke to her about it, 'we are all players in the same company: and we all like speaking parts.'

'And how did you leave Mother and Doll?' she went on.

'Purely well, Madame. They got out of the waggon about two miles from Horsham at a tavern by the road-side. It was shut up. Doll saw it. "Mother," she said, "it would do for us." They wanted me to stay, and if they could get the House I should be tapster and drawer. But I thought I would go home. So I left them.'

'And then you went home.'

'Ay—I went home. But they didn't want me there. And the parson talked about the whipping-post. So I came away again. And I found out where you were, Madame, and I came to offer my humble services.'

'Thank you kindly, Jack. But what can I do with you here?'

'I will fetch and carry. I want no wages but just to live. Let me stay with your Ladyship.'

He looked so earnest and so honest that Jenny turned to me. 'He might be useful. I believe he is honest. What say you, Will?'

What could I say? Should I turn away a friend when we might want all the friends we could find? How we were to keep our new servant was more than I knew: however, there he was, upon our hands. It was a kindly act of Jenny, when her fortunes were at their worst, to take over this poor lad who was thrown upon the world without a trade—save that of rustic labourer, which is useless in London: without a character: and without friends. Jenny's consent saved him—he could remain honest.

'Vex not your soul about money, Will. We shall want none. There is always money when it is really wanted. See how cheaply I live: I cannot wear out my fine clothes—indeed, the mob has left me mighty few to wear: I have no rent to pay nor any servants. It is true that my money is nearly gone, but there are still things—well—things of which you know nothing: and the Judge who thinks so much about the Majesty of the Law—will surely relent before long. If he would come to see me I think I could soften his heart.'

'Indeed you would, Jenny, if it was of the hardness of the nether millstone.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.

At this juncture the question of money became pressing. For three months I had been out of a place. Jenny's money, of which she was so prodigal, was coming to an end; and although she hinted at other resources it became obvious to me that the attempt must be made to find employment. I looked forward to another round of walking about the town day after day in fruitless search. At this juncture, however, an event happened wholly unexpected, which changed the position altogether both for myself and, as it proved, for Jenny.

You have heard how I visited my cousin in the Prison: how I found him ragged and half starved; and how I gave him five guineas from his wife, which he instantly gambled away. Jenny sent him no more money; nor did she speak of him again; nor did I again visit him; nor did I think upon him. To think of one who had been my life-long enemy served no purpose but to make me angry: even now, after thirty years, when I have long since forgiven this poor deluded wretch, ever running after a Will-o'-the-wisp, I cannot think of what he did for me—how he made it impossible for my father to be reconciled—without a momentary wrath boiling up in my heart. Still, I say, at thinking of my Cousin Matthew the pulse beats quicker; the blood rises to my cheeks; it is like a wound whose scar never vanishes, though it may be hidden away: I would not injure Matthew if he were still living in the world, but I cannot forget. The old rule taught to children was that we must forget and forgive; two boys

fight and are reconciled: the master flogs the boy, who is then forgiven and his offence at once forgotten: we all forget and forgive daily: yet some things may not be forgotten: the long years of continued persecution, animosity, misrepresentation and conspiracy against dear life I cannot forget, though I have long since forgiven.

One evening Mr. Ramage came to see me. 'Mr. Will,' he said, 'I have called to tell you what you ought to know. The Alderman, Sir, has I fear lost his wits: his misfortunes have made him distracted: he now dreams that he is living in a palace, and that his riches have no limit. He buys land; he gives his daughters diamonds; he founds almshouses——'

'If he believes all that, he is surely happy,' I said.

This faithful servant shook his head. 'There is a look in his eyes which belies his words,' he said, 'I would rather see him wretched in his senses than happy without them.'

'How does he live?'

'He has a room on the Master's side; some of his old friends of the City send him a guinea every week: his daughters pass the day with him. He wants for nothing. But, Mr. Will—the change! the change!' and so his eyes filled with tears. 'And he who would have been Lord Mayor—Lord Mayor—next year!'

'How do my cousins treat you?'

'If I was a dog and toothless they could not treat me worse, because I gave that evidence.'

The unfortunate Alderman! This was, indeed, a wretched ending to an honourable career. I suppose that he knew nothing and suspected nothing of what was threatening; and that the news of his wrecked fortunes fell upon him like a thunderbolt. That some of his friends sent him a guinea a week showed that he was pitied rather than blamed for this wreck and ruin of a noble House. Poor

old merchant! And this after his Alderman's pride and glory: after being Warden of his Company: after a long partnership in one of the oldest Houses in the City! Fortune, which used to put Kings down and put Kings up, just by a turn of her wheel, now makes rich merchants bankrupt and consigns Aldermen to Debtors' Prisons in order to bring home to all of us—even the humble musician—the uncertainty of human wealth. His wits gone a-wandering! A happiness for him: a thing to be expected, when, at his age, there had fallen upon him the thing which City merchants dread worse than death.

'How can we help him?' I asked.

'Nay: there is no help, but pity and to bear the scorn of the young ladies as best one may.'

'Do they know that Matthew is in the prison with him?'

'No, Sir. They do not know. They do not inquire after Mr. Matthew. But it was of him, Sir, that I came to speak.'

It then appeared that since in every depth of misery there is a lower depth, so the unfortunate man had sunk still lower since I last saw him. He was absolutely destitute, ragged, starving, even barefooted.

'Will,' said Alice, 'we must take him to-morrow what we can spare. After all he is your cousin. You must forgive him.'

'I would not harm him, certainly.'

Alas! Silver and gold had we little: out of our slender store we might spare two or three shillings and some provisions. Half a loaf; a piece of cheese; a piece of gammon; a bottle of beer; these things I carried over to the Fleet Prison in the morning. I also carried over a warm coat which I could ill spare; a pair of shoes and stockings; a warm wrapper for the neck; and a thick blanket.

I had no difficulty in finding Matthew. He sat in a bare and wretched room where, on this cold day of January with a sharp frost outside, there was no fire in the grate, no curtains to the rattling windows, no carpet, no beds, nothing but the hard planks to lie upon when night fell and the poor debtors could huddle together for such warmth as the half-starved human body could afford. There was a small bench—I suppose it found its wav there by accident. Matthew sat on that, his feet under the bench, his body bent, his hands clasped. I called him by name. 'Matthew!'

He looked up. He knew me. He murmured something, I know not what, but it was unfriendly. To the last, he remained unfriendly.

I opened my bundle. I took out my provisions and the bottle of beer. He ate and drank enormously, but without a word of thanks. Then I took out the stockings and the shoes and put them on: tied the kerchief round his neck; laid the thick blanket on the floor, laid him on it and rolled it round him. He was quite unresisting; he was without gratitude; he cursed, but mechanically, and as if he could say nothing else. Instead of getting warmer, his teeth chattered and he shivered still.

I spoke to him again. 'Is there anything more I can do for you, Matthew?'

'You can go away,' he said, articulate at last. 'You can go away and leave me. The sight of you makes me mad.' I have since thought that this might be a sign of repentance.

'I will go away directly. Is there anything more I can do for you?'

'I want,' he said, lifting his head and looking round, 'I want to have my turn. The last time I lost. If you will find the man who won my coat and will send him here, I

shall be warm directly, and I can have another turn. I've lost a good deal, somehow. The luck's been against me, always against me.'

He lay back and shivered again, though now he was wrapped up in the blanket with a warm coat on over his old rags. He should have been quite warm. I felt his forehead; it was hot and dry.

'Matthew,' I said, 'I think you are in some kind of fever. Shall I bring a doctor for you?' There are generally about a thousand people in this barrack, men, women, and children, yet they have not so much as an apothecary in the place. Outside, there is the wise woman who knows the herbs and professes to cure all the diseases that flesh is heir to with a bundle of camomile, feverfew, or vervain. She commonly lives in a court. In Fleet Street there is the apothecary who has a shop full of drugs. He despises the wise woman, yet is not so much wiser than she is, except in his own conceit. There is the tooth-drawer; and there is the bone-setter; but for physicians there are none.

His face, now that the pains of cold and hunger were appeased, looked gray, and what the old women call drawn. It is a bad sign had I known it, but I did not. I thought he was suffering from cold and hunger first, and from some kind of fever brought on by privation.

'You think,' he murmured—his voice was sunk almost to a whisper—'to bring a man—a murderer—to make an end—that is your revenge. But you shall not. I will send to the Warden for protection. Go away. Leave me alone. I can do you no more harm. I will have no doctor sent by you, to poison me.'

'Do you know, Matthew, that Probus received such terrible injuries in pillory that he will remain blind for the rest of his life?'

'Blind?' he sat up eagerly repeating. 'Blind for the rest of his life. Ha! Then he will not be able to find me. Will, he wanted to get you hung—so as to be out of the way. He was going to try next to get me hung. Then all the money would be his. Blind, is he? Then he can't find me. Will, the man is a devil; now a blind devil; a devil in the dark.' The thought seemed to revive and to comfort him.

'The other man, Merridew, was killed by the mob in pillory.'

'Killed—killed—by the mob. I was afraid he was going to give me up for the reward. Then I am safe; at last. Both of them out of the way. Now I shall prosper again.'

'Yes—you are quite safe.'

'Will,' he held out his hand. 'Don't bear malice. Don't give information against me.'

'I am not going to give any information against you.' But I could not take his hand, for which I was afterwards sorry.

'The information ought to be worth fifty pounds at least and a Tyburn ticket—a Tyburn ticket,' he went on repeating the words over one after the other, which showed the weakness of his condition.

It is useless setting down all the nonsense he talked. After a while I left him and looked about for someone who would attend to him. Presently I found an old man in rags, almost as bad as Matthew's, who undertook to look after him and give him some food from time to time. So I went away and repaired to my daily post at Newgate again, saying nothing to Jenny about this illness.

I repeat that I had no thought of anything but what they call a feverish cold, which would be checked by the warmth and the food. You may therefore imagine my

surprise when I went to visit the sick man in the morning to learn that he was dead.

'He talked a lot of nonsense,' said the old man, his nurse; 'all day long he talked nonsense about murdering and hanging, and dividing thousands. Now and then I gave him a bit and a sup and he went on talking. There was no candle, and I lay down beside him with a corner of his blanket over me, and in the middle of the night I woke up and found that he had left off talking and was quite still and cold. So I went to sleep again.' The insensate wretch had actually finished his sleep beside the corpse.

Matthew was dead.

They showed me his body lying in a small shed against the wall. It was laid in a shell of pinewood roughly painted black, with no name or plate upon it. It was to be taken across to the churchyard of St. George's that afternoon, to be laid in a pauper's grave without mourners or friends, and with a service hurriedly gabbled over his coffin.

The old man who had nursed him was now comfortably wrapped in the blanket and clothed in the coat and stockings which Alice had sent for the use of the dead man. I hope the things kept him warm.

Matthew was dead. At first I did not understand the difference it made to me. I asked if he had left anything behind him; any letters or papers or anything at all that his sisters might desire to have. There was nothing; absolutely nothing was left of him at all.

Most of our lives are like the stone thrown in the water; it makes circles widening and growing indistinct; presently these signs vanish altogether. Then the stone is clean forgotten. So the man and his life are clean forgotten, never to be brought to mind again. Matthew left no

circles even; his was a stone that fell into the water silently and made no splash and left no mark upon the surface even for a minute. He lived for eight-and-twenty years: he ruined an old and noble House of trade; he lost all the wealth and possessions and money of the House; he lost all the money he could borrow; he plotted against me continually in order to get some of the money which might be mine; he wilfully and deliberately deceived the woman who married him; he died in a debtors' prison without a single friend in the world or a single possession to bequeath to a single friend, if he had one. To die lying on the floor—it would have been on the bare planks but for Alice; in the dark room without fire or light; what more wretched end could one desire for his worst enemy? What more miserable record could one set down against a man?

I could do nothing more. I left the poor shell in the shed and passed over to the other side. If my uncle could understand anything, I had to communicate the sad news to him. His only son was dead—What a son! What a life! What a death!

The Alderman was sitting before the fire. With him sat his two daughters. The guinea a week which was meant for him alone procured food for the two girls as well. They passed the whole day, I believe, sitting thus before the fire in gloom and bitterness; their bitterness was mostly directed against myself as the supposed cause of all their troubles.

'Cousin,' said one of them, looking up, 'you are not wanted here.'

'Perhaps not. I have come, however, to bring you news. It is not good news, I am sorry to say.'

'That one can see by the joy expressed in your face.' Yet I did not feel joyful.

'Sir,' I addressed my uncle. 'I bring you bad news.'

He looked up and smiled vacuously. 'You will find my brother, sir, on Change, I believe.'

'Yes, Sir. I would speak to you of Matthew.'

'He is in the counting-house, or perhaps on board one of the ships. Or on the Quay.'

I turned to the daughters. 'I see that he understands nothing.'

'No. He eats and sleeps. He talks nonsense. It is no use speaking to him. You have seen us in our shame and misery. Give us your news and go.'

'It is about Matthew.'

'Matthew? Where is he? We heard he had escaped.'

'You do not know? Matthew has been in this prison for some weeks.'

'Here? In this prison? And we have not seen him?'

'He has been on the Common side; on the Poor side. Perhaps that is the reason; perhaps he did not know that his father was here. But that matters nothing. Your brother Matthew is dead. He is dead.'

'Matthew dead?'

'I found him here yesterday. My wife sent him food and clothes. In the night he died.'

'Oh! And on the Common side! On the Poor side! A Pauper!'

They looked at each other. Then they burst into tears. I thought they were natural tears such as a sister might shed over the loss of her brother. But they were not. 'Oh!' they cried. 'Oh! Oh! Oh! And now you will have the whole of that great fortune. And we thought that you would die and that Matthew would have it. What a misfortune! What a dreadful thing!' They wept and lamented, capping each other in lamentations all to the effect that the fortune had fallen to the undeserving one. 'And after all his plots and after his

shameful trial before all the world! And after his highway robbery! And after the things that have been done to us! and now people will say that Matthew died a Pauper—on the Common side! On the Poor side! We can never hold up our heads again.'

So I left these dear creatures. Never could I understand why they attributed any one of their misfortunes to me; nor of what nature were the plots to which they referred; nor why my trial was shameful.

However, I left these poor ladies. The reduction in their circumstances; their precarious condition; their having nothing but the guinea a week given by the Alderman's old friend; the uncertainty of his life; all should be considered when we think of their bitterness.

For my own part, it was not until my cousins reminded me that I understood the great difference which the event made to me.

I was the survivor: and my succession came to me in less than three years after my father's death.

I was the survivor. At a single step I rose from the condition of a simple fiddler, at twenty-five or thirty shillings a week, to the possession of a fortune of over a hundred thousand pounds.

I hastened to our trusty attorney, Mr. Dewberry. I apprised him of what had happened; he undertook to present my claims and to transfer the money to my name, which he faithfully effected, and without difficulty.

Then I went on to Newgate.

'What is the matter, Will?' cried Jenny, 'you look strangely agitated.'

'Jenny'—I took her hand and held it—'you told me the other day that you were in no anxiety about money.'

'I never am, Will. For people of parts there is always plenty of money.'

'You are a Prophetess, Jenny. You will never want for money so long as you live. For all that I have is yours, and I am rich.'

'You are rich?' Over her face, so quick to change, there passed a cloud. 'You are rich? Then—Will . . . then . . . if you are rich—I must be—a widow. Is Matthew dead?'

'He is dead, Jenny.'

She sank into a chair. She shed no tears: she expressed no sorrow.

'Matthew is dead. I wish I had never met him—Matthew is dead.'

'He is dead, Jenny. He died in the prison.'

'And I am a widow. I am free again. I am a widow who never was a wife. Will, I would not speak ill of the dead—of the unburied: but . . . alas! I can find no good words to speak of him. He can do no more harm—either to you or to me.'

'Let us not speak of him, then.'

'No—we must forget him. As for this money, Will, it is yours—your own—yours and Alice's—and the lovely boy's.'

'Jenny—all that we have is yours: all that we have and more . . . more . . . gratitude and love and devotion—which are more than gold.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

COMMUTATION

At that very moment, while we were trying to find words befitting the occasion which would not admit of grief yet demanded the respect due to Death, arrived the news so long expected.

The Governor of the Prison, accompanied by our friend the Counsel for the Prosecution, stood at the door, followed by one of the Turnkeys.

'Madame,' said the Governor, 'I come to bring you news.' But he looked so serious that my heart sank.

'And I, Madame,' said the lawyer, 'shall be pleased to add a codicil to this intelligence.'

'Gentlemen, I have already this morning received news enough for one day at least. Am I, gentlemen, ordered to adorn the next procession along the Oxford Road?'

'No, Madame,' the Governor replied. 'But I wish the news were more joyful. I had hoped—I had expected—considering the whole case——'

I looked at Jenny. She turned suddenly pale; I thought she was going to faint. Consider: she had persuaded herself that a full and immediate pardon would be granted. She had no doubt as to that point. She did not faint; she recovered and spoke with white lips and a hard forced voice.

'Tell me quick!'

'Madame, His Majesty has graciously commuted the sentence into transportation to the plantations for the term of five years.'

Jenny made no reply. I groaned aloud. Transportation? To go out as a servant! To be bought by a planter and made to work in the tobacco fields under the lash? This for Jenny! All the world knew what transportation meant and what were the mercies served out to convicts.

The Governor sighed and shook his head. The lawyer took up the tale. 'Madame,' he said, 'believe me; everything has been done that could be done. Had you pleaded Not Guilty you would most certainly have been acquitted. Madame, I know your reasons, and I respect them. You

pleaded Guilty. Your reasons were not such as could be laid before the King, unless privately. The Judge in your case is a lawyer of great eminence; that is to say, he is jealous of the Law; he holds that above all things the Law must be feared. He is called a hanging Judge, being a most merciful man; but the Law must be respected. There must not be one Law for the rich rogue and another for the poor rogue.'

'Rich or poor,' said Jenny, 'I am a rogue for having stolen nightcaps in my garrets; and I am a rogue and a vagabond because I am an actress.'

'Nay, Madame; but the Toast of the Town, the most lovely——'

'My loveliness does not stand me in much stead at thi juncture. Tell me again. I am to be shipped across seas: I am to stay there five years: I am to herd on board with the wretched women outside: I am to work in the fields with them and with negroes: I am to be whipped by my master: I am to live on sweet potatoes. I am to wear sacking for all my clothes. Gentlemen,' she added with flushed cheek, 'go, tell the King that I will not accept this mercy.'

'Nay, Madame,' said the lawyer with persuasive tongue. 'You go too fast. Those who have friends can evade the obligations of service; you, who have so many friends, will find that you have nothing to fear beyond the voyage and a short residence in a pleasant climate. For my own part, dear Madame, I hope to see you before another year begins back upon the boards of Drury Lane, with all the town at your feet. I pine, Madame, I languish for the first evening to arrive.'

'Jenny,' I whispered, 'for Heaven's sake be careful. Consider; this gentleman cannot be deceiving you. If there is, as he says, no real obligation to service: and if, as

he says, the sentence means only a short residence in a pleasant country—then surely you must accept. There is, however, the voyage. Perhaps, Sir,' I addressed the lawyer, 'it will be possible for Madame to take the voyage in a private cabin apart from the rest of the—the company.'

'It will certainly be possible. She may take state rooms for herself and her maid: she will be treated as a gentlewoman. It is only a question of arrangement with the Captain. Madame, I assure you, upon my honour, that the sentence means no more than what I have stated. It is a brief exile in which you will endure no other indignity than that of sailing on board the ship which carries a few scores of the wretches going out as slaves—if one may call an Englishman a slave.'

Jenny wavered. Her cheek was still red with shame and disappointment. She wavered.

'Jenny,' I said, taking her hand.

She sat down. 'Let it be, then, as you will.'

'That is bravely resolved,' said the Governor. 'And now I shall have the pleasure of removing you immediately from this close and confined chamber to one more airy and more commodious.'

'Gentlemen' said Jenny, still crestfallen, 'I thank you both for your good intentions. I should love you better if you would put a sword through me and so end it. Perhaps, however, the ship may go to the bottom. Let us hope so. It must sink, I am sure, so heavy will be the heart of lead on board it.'

So, with renewed protestations of assistance and goodwill the lawyer went away with the Governor. In the yard I observed that he stopped and looked upon the crowd of women, many of whom he would help to the gallows. Does such a lawyer, always occupied in getting up and preparing a case, so as to persuade a jury into a verdict of

'Guilty' ever feel remorse at having done so, or repugnance at doing it again? Do the ghosts of those whom he has sent to the other world haunt his bedside at night? One may as well ask if the Judge who pronounces the sentence feels remorse or pity. He is the mouth of the Law; the Counsel feeds the mouth; the Governor of Newgate is the arm of the Law. However, that the Counsel for the Prosecution should take so much interest in the release of a prisoner is, I should think, without example in the history of Newgate, where they have never had before, and can never have again, a prisoner so lovely, so attractive, so interesting, as Jenny. After him came another visitor. It was my Lord Brockenhurst who brought us the news we had already heard—but with a difference.

'Madame,' he said, after telling us what we had already heard, 'I shall always regret that I was not the first to let you know. Indeed, I have flown. The commutation of the sentence involves a voyage; that cannot be denied; but there is no obligation to service. That will be arranged for you; I can undertake so much, if necessary. The voyage is no great matter; six weeks if you are fortunate; eight weeks, at most, will set you on shore; the country is said to be beautiful; the climate is healthy, the Virginians are mostly gentlemen of good family.'

'I thank you, my Lord, for your kind words.'

'There is another thing, Madame. I am empowered to assure you that the Petition which you drew up for your young protégée here has been graciously received by Her Majesty the Queen. She has herself asked for the remission of the capital sentence. The girl's life will be spared.'

'This is good news, at least.'

'On conditions, which you must expect. She will go with you to Virginia for five years. You can take her as your maid, if you please.'

'With me for five years?' Jenny repeated. 'I know so little of what is ordered——'

'Briefly, Madame, a prisoner under sentence of transportation is engaged as a servant, generally on a tobacco plantation, where he works with the negroes. If there should happen to be one among them of a superior class he becomes an accountant or even a manager; or if he can command influence or money his engagement is merely nominal. Your engagement will be a form which I shall arrange for you. This girl can remain with you. When you come home you can bring her with you.'

'In five years?'

'No—in much less time—in a few months. I am permitted on the highest authority to assure you that your banishment will be but short. As soon as it can with decency be asked for, a full pardon will be asked for and it will be granted. You will then only have to return in order to delight your friends once more.'

'When shall I have to go?'

'A ship is now fitting out. She sails in a week or a fortnight. You will sail as a cabin passenger, entrusted to the protection of the Captain. The—the other—passengers will be confined between decks, I believe.'

'My Lord, I am deeply touched by all your kindness.'

'Madame, *I* have done little—little indeed. Would it had been more! I shall now, with your permission, make arrangements with the Captain of the ship for your entertainment on the voyage and your reception on reaching the port.'

'So,' said Jenny, 'in one day I am deprived of my husband. I am a widow who never was a wife. I am deprived of my country—which is London; and of all my friends.'

His lordship's face changed. 'Your husband, Madame? Is he dead?'

'He died last night. Let us not speak of him.'

'Then you are free!' He glanced at me: I saw his meaning and the purpose in his eyes. 'You are free!'

I stepped out, leaving them together. In a few minutes he came out with the look of one distracted, and not knowing what he was doing or whither he went.

Within the cell Jenny was sitting at the table with red and tearful eyes.

'That good and noble friend, Will, would make me Lady Brockenhurst.'

'Jenny—why not?'

'He would go with me: he would marry me here and sail with me. No—no—I promised his sister. What? Because I love a man—the best of men—should I give him children who would be ashamed of their mother and her origin? Mine would be a pretty history for them to learn, would it not? No, Will, no. Believe me, I love him too well. Even if he were a meaner man, I could never bring my history to smirch the chronicles of a respectable family.'

She was silent a little. 'Will,' she said presently, looking up, 'all that I foretold has proved true. I want no money. I am going out to a strange country. It is not Ireland as I thought. It is Virginia. I see it again so plain—so clear—I shall know it when I land. But I can see no farther. There will be no return for me to Drury Lane. My vision stops short—now that I see you—somewhere—with me—I see Alice also. But I cannot see England or London—or the Black Jack or Drury Lane.'

Then we moved to the more commodious chamber, where I soothed her spirits with a cup of tea, which is

better far than wine or cordials for the refreshment of the mind. Presently she began to recover a little from her disappointment.

'It will be lonely at first,' she said, 'without a single friend, and I suppose that a transported convict—say that for me, Will—it hath a strange sound. It is like a slap in the face—a transported convict——'

'Nay, Jenny, do not say it.'

'I must. I say that though a transported convict must be despised, yet I shall have my girl here with me, and perhaps my Lord will prove right and I may come home again. Yet I do not think so. Will, there is one consolation. At last I shall get clean away from my own people. They used to congregate round the stage-door of the Theatre to congratulate their old friend on her success. The Orange-Girls were never tired of claiming old friendship. I married in order to get away from them, but Matthew never meant to keep his promise—I am tired, Will, of my own people. They have made me suffer too much. Henceforth let them go and hang without any help from me.'

'It is high time, Jenny.'

'The Act ends lamely, perhaps. It may be the last Act of the Play. The ship leaves the Quay. On the deck stands the heroine in white satin, waving her handkerchief. The people weep. The bo's'n blows his whistle. The sailors stamp about; the curtain falls. Will, if things are real—what am I to do when I get back—if I do get back? How am I to live?'

'Jenny,' I said seriously, 'I believe that one so good and so fearless, for whom daily prayers are offered, will be led by no will of her own, into some way of peace and happiness.'

'Think you so, good cousin? There spoke Alice. It

is her language. She says that beyond the stars are eyes that can see and hands that can lead. 'Why, Will, for my people, the only hand that leads is the hand of hunger: the only hand that directs is the hand with the whip in it; as for eyes that see'—she shook her head sadly—'I wish there were,' she said. 'Perhaps there would then be some order in St. Giles's. And there would be some hope for the poor rogues. Oh! Will—the poor helpless, ignorant, miserable rogues—of whom I am one—a transported convict—a transported convict—how we suffer! how we die! And pass away and are forgotten! Will . . . Will . . . I go with a heavy heart—I go to meet my death. For never more shall I return. Where is the eye that sees? Oh! Will—where is the hand that leads?'

CHAPTER XXV.

TRANSPORTATION.

In the evening when I left the prison, it was with emotions strange and bewildering. Jenny, who was to have received a free pardon, was sent, a self-accused convict, to the plantations. To the plantations, where they send the common rogues and villains. She was to go out on board a convict ship, counted happy because although one of that shameful company, she was not kept below all the voyage on convict fare with those wretches vile and unspeakable.

And I was rich. After all these troubles: after my father's displeasure: after my disinheritance: after my persecution and imprisonments: I was rich——

And Matthew, the cause of all, was dead.

Truly the hand of the Lord had been heavy upon them

all. Matthew dying in starvation and misery. Mr. Probus, lying in prison, a pauper and blind: Merridew stoned to death: the other two escaped with life, but that was all. But the innocent were suffering with the guilty: the old Alderman languishing in a debtors' prison with no hope of release: and Jenny a convict to be transported across the seas. They did well to call it a voyage: a short exile in a pleasant climate: she was a convict: she was under sentence.

And I was rich. So I kept saying to myself as I walked home that evening. So I kept saying to Alice when I told her what had happened while we sat till late at night talking over these acts of Providence.

We were to see her go far away across the ocean—a convict, never perhaps to return: to see her go alone, save for her little maid: in danger of wicked men, of whom there are plenty over every part of the world: perhaps, in spite of what was said, a servant even, at her master's beck and call: the woman to whom I owed more than life: far more than life: honour: and the respect of the world: and the happiness of my children and grand-children: yea, even unto the third and fourth generation. What was wealth? Where was its happiness when we had to think of Jenny? It was this woman, I say, who by her ready wit, her generosity, her fearlessness in the presence of risks certain and dangers inevitable, made my innocence as clear as the noonday's sun. For this service shall her name be blessed among those who come after me and bear my name and are stimulated to deeds of honour by the thought that they come of an honourable stock. Think of the burden upon their lives had they been doomed to remember that their father or their grandfather before them had suffered a shameful death for highway robbery!

Jenny saved me—but at what a price! She braved the

worst that the rogues, her former friends, could do to her. She compelled her own people: their own associates to betray them in order to prove my innocence. She paid for the betrayal by prison, trial and ruin. She poured out her money like water in order that no doubt whatever should exist in the mind of the Court or the Jury as to the real character of the witnesses. In return she endured the foul air and the foul companionship of Newgate and a shameful transportation to Virginia, there to be set up, if her sentence was carried out, and sold as a slave for five years. It was no common gratitude—we repeated over and over again—that we owed her for this service. We owed her all—all—all—that we possessed or ever could possess.

But money cannot effect everything: it could not, in this case, give Jenny the full pardon and the immediate release we desired.

In the dead of night, as I lay sleepless, tortured in my mind because I could think of nothing that we could do for Jenny, who had done so much for us, Alice spoke to me, sitting up in bed.

'Husband,' she said, and then she fell to weeping for a while and it seemed as if she could not stop her crying and sobbing—but they were tears of prayer and praise. 'Let us talk. It is yet night. The world sleeps; but the Lord is awake. Let us talk.'

So we talked.

'I am heavy in my mind about that poor creature,' she began.

'And I no less, my dear.'

'We must not think that the innocent are punished with the guilty. That old man the Alderman is pulled down by his son: they lie in ruin together: but he is innocent: for this reason he has been permitted to lose his wits and now feels nothing. Jenny suffers because

though she is innocent in intention, she is guilty in fact. Will, if I think of that poor creature, so good and generous and so self-denying: and of the company among whom she has lived: and of the people among whom she was born: and how she has no religion, not the least sense of religion, I think that this new business may be but the leading of the poor trembling soul to knowledge.'

'She is assured that before long she will be permitted to return.'

'Perhaps she will not be permitted to return. There is One who is higher than kings.'

'What would you do, Alice?'

'Let us ask ourselves, Will, what we are to do with our new riches. I am but a homely body, I cannot become a fine lady. As for yourself, remember, my dear, that you have been a musician, playing for your livelihood at the Dog and Duck: and you have stood your trial at the Old Bailey: and you have been in a Debtors' Prison: and your father's House is bankrupt: and your name is held in contempt where formerly it was in honour. Where will you seek your new friends? In the country? But the Quality despise a musician. In the City? They despise a musician much: a prisoner for debt, more: a bankrupt, most.'

'I know not what is in your mind, Alice.'

'I am coming to it, my dear. Remember, once more, what you said to-night that we owe her all—all—all. Your life: your honour: your son's pride in his father: my life, for the agony and the shame would have killed me. Oh! Will, what can we do for her? What can we give her in return for benefits and services such as these?'

'I will give her all I have, my dear, my whole fortune, this new great fortune. I will give her everything but you, my dear, and the boy.'

'Money she does not want, and it will not help her in this strait.'

'What then can we do? We have gratitude — it is hers. And our fortune, it is hers if she will take it.'

'Oh! Will, be patient with me, dear. We can give her indeed, all that we have: we can give her'—she bent over me and kissed me, and her tears fell upon my forehead—'we can give her, Will—ourselves.'

'What?'

'We can give her—ourselves. The whole of our lives. We can become her servants in grateful thanks for all that she has done for us.'

'But how, Alice, how?'

'Consider: she is going out to a new country—alone. We know not into what company she may fall. It is a rough country, not yet fully settled, I am told: there are fierce Indians and cruel snakes and wild beasts—though I fear the men worse than the beasts. Who will protect her? She is beautiful and men are sometimes driven mad by beauty in women.'

I began to understand.

'Let us go away with her to this new country, where she shall be the mistress and we will be the servants. They say it is a beautiful country, with fine sunshine and fruits in plenty. Let us go with her, Will, and protect her from dangers and teach her to forget the thieves' kitchen and make her happy among the flowers and the woods. We will turn her captivity into a holiday: we will think of nothing in the world but to make her happy. I have told you, Will, what is in my mind. And, my dear, I verily believe the Lord Himself has put it there.'

I reflected for a little. Then I kissed her. 'I am content, my dear,' I said. 'As you desire, so shall it be.

We will go with Jenny and become her servants as long as the duty shall be laid upon us.'

And so we fell asleep. And in the morning this thing seemed a dream. But it was no dream. Then we had to begin our preparations. It would be close on three weeks, we learned, before the ship, the *Pride of Ratcliffe*, would be ready to drop down the river. I went on board and saw the Captain. He told us that Lord Brockenhurst had already engaged the best cabin for Madame, that although one of the convicts she was to be treated differently: to be separated from the rest: not to mix with them: wherein, he said grimly, 'she is lucky indeed.' With her and in her cabin was to go another convict, a young girl. They were to mess in the Captain's cabin. 'See,' he said, 'what it is to be a friend of a noble Lord.' I told him that the lady was a cousin of my own, which disconcerted him. However, without many more words, we came to an understanding. I was to have a cabin for so much. And the Captain undertook to lay in provisions for us. He was kind enough to draw up a list of the things we should require: it appeared necessary for a passenger to America to buy up half the beeves and sheep of Smithfield, together with all the turkey, geese and poultry of Leadenhall, not to speak of wine and rum, enough for the whole crew. He said that in bad weather so much of the live-stock was destroyed that it was necessary to provide against these accidents. So he prevailed, and I think I kept the whole ship's company with my stores.

The ship was of 350 tons burden, a stout, well-built ship, with three masts, not unlike one of my father's West Indiamen, but inferior in tonnage: she was slow, it afterwards appeared, generally doing from four knots an hour, or about a hundred knots a day at such times as there was a favourable wind. If the wind was unfavourable, as

generally happened, her speed was much le
length of the voyage, the Captain reckon
one voyage with another, she would get a
eight weeks: the uncertainty of the time,
out, as well as the possibility of storms,
apparently vast quantity of provisions whic
in for our party.

And now began a busy time. First I
our design to Mr. Dewberry, the attorne
approved of it. Next I arranged with h
investment of my new fortune, as to whic
difficulty at all as soon as the death of
been duly proved and attested. The amo
originally £100,000, had now by the accu
interest become over £120,000, which, at
produced the enormous income of £6,00
than a hundred pounds a week. What wo
a hundred pounds a week? Mr. Dewber
have never yet,' he said, 'found a rich man
too much wealth. For the most part h
poverty. In a word, Mr. Halliday, yo
before many months cease to be a burde
remember, great as is this income, even
City of London, and enormous as it will b
land of Virginia, there are limits to the
such an income. Keep within it: keep wit

It matters not how we made this mon
as safe as money can be made. There
shares in the National Debt. Some of these
and there were houses in the City which w
a few days my excellent attorney put my
order that I was enabled to leave Englan
and to be provided, moreover, with lette
which I could draw for such money as mig

from time to time. By this time our plans, much talked about, were matured. We would purchase an estate, as a plantation: in Virginia every estate is a plantation: it would be probably a tobacco-growing estate with its servants and slaves and buildings complete. Thither we would all go together and take up our abode. Letters were provided which I could present to responsible and honest merchants at Baltimore, by whose assistance I hoped to get what we desired, and we resolved, further, to tell Jenny nothing of these plans until we were all on board together.

The next thing was to find out what we should take out from the old country to the new. It was reported that already they made nearly everything that was wanted: such as furniture and things made out of the woods of the country, which are various and excellent. The things most in demand were reported to be knives, tools, and ironmongery of all kinds: guns and weapons: clothes of the better kind, especially dresses for gentlewomen in silk and satin and embroidered work. Books, music, and musical instruments were also scarce. I laid in a great stock of all these things: they were packed in large chests bound in iron and sent on board as they were bought.

In getting these purchases and in procuring this information the days passed quickly, because it was necessary as well that I should visit Jenny every day. A happy bustling time. After all the trouble of the past it was pleasant to think of a new world opening before us with new hopes of happiness. These hopes were realized. I do not say that people are better in the New World than in the Old; everywhere are men self-seeking and grasping: but there is less suffering, less poverty, and, I believe, none of such infernal wickedness as may be devised at home by men like Probus and Merridew. Such monstrous growths are

not found in a new country where the population is thin, and there is no place for villains to hide their heads. The worst trouble in Virginia, in those days, was with the convicts, concerning whom I shall speak immediately.

While these preparations were going on, Jenny waited in Newgate somewhat sadly. Lord Brockenhurst came to visit her daily: she had the girl whom she had saved for a maid: the lad Jack came every day to fetch and carry and do her bidding. I said nothing to this fellow of our purpose. One day, however, while he waited in the corridor outside the cell, I called him in and spoke to him seriously. 'Jack,' I said, 'tis known to thee that Madame sails for America in a week or so?'

'Ay, Sir,' and his face dropped.

'What will you do, Jack? There is the old company of the kitchen at the Black Jack: if that is broken up they have gone to the Spotted Dog.'

'No, Sir,' he said stoutly, 'I will be a rogue no more. I have promised Madame.'

'Then there is the village. You could go home again, Jack.'

'They will not have me.'

'Then, Jack, what will you do?'

He held his hat in his hands, and then with tears rolling down his cheeks he fell on his knees to Jenny. 'Take me with you, Madame,' he said. 'I will be your faithful servant to command. Only take me with you.'

'Alas, Jack! who am I that I should have a servant with me who shall be but a servant myself? Poor lad, I cannot take thee.'

'By your leave, Jenny,' I said. 'There will be the little maid to wait upon you and you will want Jack to protect both vou and her. If you consent to take him, he shall go.

'But, Will, you know the conditions. I shall not be mistress even of myself.'

'That is provided. Did not Lord Brockenhurst promise?'

'Lord Brockenhurst will do what he can. Of that I have no doubt. But as to his power across the Atlantic, of that I have grave doubts.'

'Jenny,' I took her hand. 'Do you trust my word? Could I deceive you? Could I ever hold out hopes unless I knew that they were well grounded?'

'Why, Will, whom should I trust if not you?'

'Then, Jenny, listen and believe. It is so arranged and provided that on landing in America you will be provided with a house fit for your station and with everything, so long as you may stay in the country, that a gentlewoman can require. And all that you have or enjoy will be yours —your own—and over all you shall be mistress.'

'Dear Will—this providing is your providing.'

'A manservant you must have to begin with. Negroes there are in plenty, but an English manservant—an honest'—here I looked Jack in the face; he reddened and was confused—'an honest, strong, capable, faithful servant, that you want, Jenny; and that you must have, and here he is.' I clapped the fellow on the shoulder as he still knelt before his mistress.

'Get up, Jack,' she said. 'Since it must be so, it must. But you must thank Mr. Halliday and not me.'

It was not a servant that she took out with her but a slave, one of those willing slaves to whom their slavery is freedom, who have no thoughts or desires of their own; none but the thought how best to please their Lords or Ladies. Such servants are rare, except those who have served in the army, where duty is taught to be the first virtue.

'At least,' said Jenny, 'I shall not be put ashore alone or among the gang of poor creatures with whom I ought to stand as a companion.' And indeed the prospect of this strong fellow to protect her at the outset caused her, I was pleased to find, no slight consolation. Yet I dared not tell her till it was too late to be altered, the resolution which we had formed to go with her as well.

Despite the injurious treatment of my two cousins, I took it greatly to heart that the unfortunate Alderman should, for no fault of his own, be condemned to imprisonment for the short remainder of his days. He was past understanding where he was In imagination he rolled in his chariot from Clapham Common to the Wharf and Counting House: he received the Captains of the West Indiamen: he appeared on Change: he dined with his Company: he sat on the Bench: he walked in his garden: he cut pine-apples and grapes in his hothouses. He was quite happy. But there was the shame of knowing that he was there and that he was supported by the charity of his old friends.

Accordingly I sought Mr. Dewberry's advice and help. There was now but little time to be lost, a matter which made things easier, because, Mr. Dewberry said, so long as there was any chance of getting more by putting off the matter it would be put off. In a word, he called together the creditors. They were fortunately a small body: all those who had claims in respect to Jenny's liabilities were cut off by Matthew's death. The debt of Mr. Probus was also removed by his death because it was an account of moneys borrowed by Matthew privately. There remained the debts of the House, and these were due to merchants and to banks. The creditors met, therefore, and I attended. Mr. Dewberry pointed out that my desire was the release of my uncle: that the creditors had no claim upon me:

that anything I might offer with the view of attaining that object was a free and voluntary gift: that if the creditors refused this gift they would never get anything at all: and finally that they should consider that the poor man now in prison had not been a party to any of the transactions which led to the ruin of the House.

They asked half an hour to consider. At the end of that time, they offered to accept in full discharge of all claims, two shillings in the pound. I was advised to accept this offer. It took nearly £20,000 out of my fortune; in fact, all the accumulations. But I had the satisfaction before I left of releasing my uncle from his chamber in the loathed King's Bench.

I knew how I should be received by my cousins: but words break no bones. Besides, I wished to release him, so to speak, with my own hands.

'You are come again then,' said my elder cousin, who for some reason unknown, was much the more bitter of the two. 'There is your handiwork. Gaze upon it.' She pointed to her father, 'And exult! Exult!'

'On the whole,' I said, 'I can, this day at least, exult in my work.'

'It is your doing. None but yours. If you had signed what he wished this misery would have been saved. And you would have had quite as much as one in your beggarly trade could desire.'

'Thank you, cousin. You are always kind to me.'

'You are my brother's murderer. You have ruined my father,' she added.

'I am anything you wish. Indeed, I have no reply to make to such charges as these. Meantime I have come here to-day in order to release your father. Down below waits the attorney with his discharge in due form. He is free. You can take him out of the Prison.'

'Out of prison?'

They both stared at me. Their eyes flashed: the sudden joy of liberty seized them: they sprang to their feet.

'Free? He is free?' cried the younger. 'Father, you are free—do you hear?'

'Free?' he replied. 'I have been free of the City for six-and-thirty years.'

'Free!' echoed the elder. 'What is the good of freedom without the means of getting a living? Free? Let us stay here, where at least we have a guinea a week.'

'Your livelihood is provided for. You will receive during your three lives the sum of three guineas paid weekly.'

'Three guineas?' The younger caught my hand. 'Cousin Will! Oh! It is our living. It is everything to us poor paupers. Will, I doubt we have misjudged you.'

Her sister snatched her hand away. 'Don't touch him!' she cried. 'Don't speak to him! Three guineas a week! The miserable pittance! and he has thousands —thousands—thousands a year'—her voice rose to a shriek—'which ought to have been our murdered brother's and our own!'

One must never look for gratitude or even for reasonable recognition: or for the courtesy of thanks: but these words were really more shrewish and more bitter than one can endure. However, I made no reply and left them, pleased at least that one of them could be moved to confessing her prejudice. I know not what became of them, nor have I ever heard tidings of them since that day.

One more addition was made to our party.

My brother-in-law, Tom Shirley, came to me one morning with a serious face—serious at least, for him. 'Will,' he said, 'I have been thinking about my own concerns, that is, my wife has been thinking about them

for me. It is a great advantage for a man to give over that part of his business to his wife.'

'Well, Tom?'

'She says, if I remember right, because she has been saying a good deal, that so long as I am content to play first fiddle at the Dog and Duck for thirty shillings a week it matters not, as we shall never get on, and shall have to live in the Rules all our life. Well, Will, I would as lief live in the Rules as out of them. There is very good company in the Rules, almost as good as in the King's Bench itself.'

'She is not content that you should always play the fiddle at that place, and you are. Is that so?'

'For the patronage of aristocracy and the esteem of an audience of taste there is no equal to the Dog and Duck,' he replied gravely, as if he meant what he said of the dirty disreputable haunt of 'prentices and their kind. 'But I confess, Will, that there are times when I consider my musical compositions and when I long for a wider popularity. I think that I should like an opportunity to get my name better known. At the Dog and Duck the noble audience doth not ask the name of the composer.'

'You would leave the Rules if you could, and go live at Westminster, where there are concerts and rich patrons? Well, Tom, we are now rich. We might manage that for you I believe.'

He shook his head. 'No. Best not waste good money. I should only get back here again in a month or two. My dear Will, if you only knew how difficult it is to refuse when things are offered on credit. Now, in the Rules no one has any credit, so that we save all our money.'

I never heard of Tom's saving any money. However, I asked him what he would have.

He would go with me. But did they want music in Virginia?

'Perhaps not now. Wait, however, till they have heard and seen me. I believe there is no musical composer, yet, in the Province. I will be the first Virginian musician. I will be the Handel of Virginia.'

'Well, Tom, why not?' The knowledge of my great income made me yielding. Was there not enough for a dozen Toms? 'I dare say we could pay out your detaining creditors with no great difficulty.'

'Not for the world, my dear brother-in-law. Even from you I could not accept such a favour. Pay me out? Why, it would be no favour: it would be a crime. Do you know that my only detaining creditor is an attorney? Pay an attorney? Never. Remember Probus. Surely you have had enough of attorneys.'

'Indeed I am not likely to forget Probus as long as I live. But then, if you are not paid out, Tom, how will you get out?'

'I shall walk out, Mr. William Halliday. If you let us go out with you I shall send the wife on board with Alice, and I shall then walk out with my violin in one hand and a bundle of music in the other on the evening before the ship sails. I shall go on board. When my creditor finds out that I have taken my departure, which may take weeks —or it may take months—that honest attorney will be pained, no doubt, for he is of a revengeful spirit. He will then do exactly what he pleases. But I believe he will not venture out to Virginia. If he should dare that attempt I will give him to friendly Indians in order to be —carbonadoed, as I believe you Americans call it. That attorney, Will, shall be carbonadoed over a slow fire.'

Tom, then, was to come with us. So with Jenny, her maid, and her man: Tom Shirley and his wife: Alice, the boy and myself, we should make up as pleasant a family party as ever sailed across the Atlantic.

The time approached when we were to go on board. The ship was to drop down with the ebb on Saturday morning at nine with the turn of the tide. Everything was on board; on the forecastle on deck my live stock was gathered: sheep, pigs, turkeys (all of which died in the Channel), geese and poultry: our furniture, books and music were stowed away in the hold: our wine and liquors were laid in bunks around the cabin: the Captain and the mate were to take meals with us: they were also so obliging as to drink up our rum and our wine. We had no leavetakings: on Friday afternoon Alice and her sister-in-law went on board. Tom joined them after sundown. At eight o'clock or thereabouts I was to bring Jenny and her party on board. Lord Brockenhurst had expressed his desire to say farewell to her on the quarter-deck.

A little after seven I repaired to the Gaol. At the gates I saw waiting three large waggons which the people were filling with boxes and bundles tied up in sacking and canvas. I thought nothing of these waggons at the moment: they did not concern me, and I entered the Lodge. There was waiting for me Jenny herself, dressed in splendour as if for a wedding. Surely no prisoner sentenced to transportation ever went on board ship in such a guise. She was taking an affectionate leave of the Governor, who was moved almost to tears by her departure.

'Indeed, Sir,' she said, 'I am grieved to have put you to so much trouble.' So she shook hands, smiling sweetly: then she turned to the turnkeys. 'I am also very much in your debt, my friends,' and walked along the whole line distributing guineas. 'God bless your Ladyship!' they uttered fervently. 'We shall never see the likes of your Ladyship here again.'

Indeed I am sure that they never will.

She mounted the steps of the coach which waited outside, she was followed by the girl, by myself, and by the lad called Jack.

'I am glad,' she said, 'that this child goes out with me to Virginia.' The child—she looked little more—took Jenny's hand and kissed it. 'She is an affectionate little fool,' said Jenny, 'and loves me much. And to think what they were going to do with her! Oh! Fools! Fools!' she cried. 'Oh! monstrous Fools!'

We were now rolling slowly along Ludgate Hill. There was a rumbling after us which continued. I looked out. They were the three waggons I had observed at the Gate.

'What are those waggons?' I asked.

'They contain my baggage. Did you think I was going abroad with nothing?'

'But in those waggons you must have the whole wardrobe of Drury Lane.'

She laughed. 'Will, you understand nothing. Did I not tell you that I would have all those turnkeys at my feet in a day or two? Well, I succeeded.'

'But what has that got to do with your baggage?'

'Why, you see, the officers that went to search my house for stolen property began with the garrets. And there they stopped. Now when my mother agreed to give evidence it was on conditions as I told you. I gave her money for compensation and I bought the whole of her stock of stolen property. It had been stored in the stone vaults under the Black Jack. They carried it over to the cellars of my house, and when there was no room left there, they used the garrets.'

'Oh! They took the garrets first.'

'Where there was very little to see. Now you under-

stand why there was such a paltry show. Could a woman in my position brave such a fate for things so miserable?'

'Jenny! Jenny! You are wonderful.'

'No, Will, only I have my wits about me.'

'You have actually converted Newgate — Newgate Prison—into a Receiving House for stolen property.'

'Five guineas apiece for the turnkeys was what it cost. I thought it the safest and the simplest plan, Will.'

'Safest and simplest!'

Before I recovered the surprise of this information we reached the stairs. On the quarterdeck was Alice with the boy.

'You dear good woman,' Jenny cried. 'You are come to see the last of the transported convict: the end of the Orange Girl!'

Yet beside my wife in her homely dress, Jenny looked like a Countess. Alice kissed her. 'We are not going to leave you, Jenny. We are going with you, your servants as long as we live.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAST TEMPTATION.

'We are waiting,' said the Captain, 'for our passengers.'

While he spoke there came alongside the ship a dozen boats or more laden with the passengers for whose sake the good ship was about to cross the Atlantic. There were, I remember—it is not possible for me to forget anything that happened on this voyage—one hundred and eight of them who came on board, men and women. They were brought down from Blackfriars Stairs in a closed lighter.

'Jenny,' I said, 'go into the cabin. Do not look at them.'

'Why, Will, I ought to be among them. I am one of them. Suffer me to look at my brothers and sisters in misfortune.'

Of these poor wretches we had seen the greater part already in Newgate. Within those walls: in the bad air; among those companions; where everything was sordid and wretched; they did not present an appearance so horrible as they did in the open air; on the bright river; in the sunshine; under the flying clouds; among the sailors; where everything spoke of freedom. The pallor of their faces; their wretched rags blowing about in the breeze; their pinched faces; the unnatural brightness of their eyes; their tottering limbs; their meek submissiveness to order; proclaimed their long detention in prison while they were waiting for the ship. As they climbed up the companion painfully; as they stepped down upon the deck; as they stood huddled together like sheep, my heart sank within me for thinking that Jenny, too, was reckoned as one of these. I glanced at her; she was thinking the same thing; her cheek was aflame; her eyes glowed; her lips trembled.

'Will,' said she; 'we are a proper company. Virginia will welcome us.'

They brought with them—faugh! the prison reek and stench. But we saw them for a few moments only. Then they were bundled down below to their own quarters and we saw the poor creatures no more.

It has been said that these poor convicts are cruelly illused on board the transport ships. I can speak only of what I saw; I know that our Captain was a humane man. I can testify to the fact that there were seldom more than two or three floggings a day, and of the women not so

many; I know that our convicts were a gang of hardened wretches whom nothing but the fear of the lash kept in order; I know that when they came on board they were for the most part in a wretched condition; of low habits from long confinement, poor food, and bad drink; that many of them lay down directly the ship got into open water and, what with sea-sickness, fever, and weakness, never got up again. The truth is that the contractors, who receive £5 a head for a voyage which takes about two months, do honestly provide the convicts the rations prescribed by the Government. These rations are sufficient but not luxurious; they consist of beef, pork, biscuits and cheese once a week; to keep up their spirits they are served a ration of gin. The beef may have been tough and the pork rusty, but such as it was the Captain served it out among them. Yet, on the voyage of seven weeks we buried forty-seven, or nearly one every day. It seems a large number; those who died were nearly all men; very few of them were women. They were unfit to face the fatigues of the voyage and the rolling of the ship; some of them were even consumptive; some were asthmatic; some were in fevers; some had other diseases; they died; perhaps they would have died at home in prison. At Newgate scarce a day passes that some poor wretch does not succumb to privation and bad air. If so many of them died on board the ship that is no proof of inhumanity.

Let us forget these poor sinners. It is easy to say that they deserved all they got. No doubt they did. And what do we deserve? And when a man like myself has gone through that gate and mouth of Hell called Newgate, he looks on the poor creatures who go there to be flogged and branded and pilloried and hanged and transported with some compassion because he knows that such as they are, such they have been made. Mr. Merridew is

always with them: the landlady of the Black Jack is always ready to buy what they offer her for sale: no respectable person will employ them; they have never been taught anything. The Divine and the schoolmaster dare not venture within their streets, which are the very Sanctuary of Wickedness; our charities are all for the deserving; we have no bowels, no compassion, for those we call the undeserving. Let us forget them. Better to lie at the bottom of the ocean, where at least it is peaceful, than to face the cruel whip of the overseer, and the burning fields of the American Plantations.

Our voyage lasted, I say, little more than seven weeks; we were wafted across a smooth sea by favouring breezes. After leaving the Channel we got into a warmer air; we began to sit on the quarterdeck. Tom and I got out our violins and played. We played for our party; we played for the sailors; we sang those part-songs which he made so well. Jenny, for her part, was silent. Now and then she spoke to me about herself.

'Will,' she said, 'if I receive that permission to return which my Lord promises, what will you do? Will you come home with me?'

'I do not know,' I told her. 'If the place pleases us, why should we go home again? My memories of home will be full of wrongs for many a year to come. I can never get back to my old friends in the City. Although, thanks to you, I was fully acquitted, I am a Newgate bird and a bird of the King's Bench. People look askance upon such a man. I must think of Alice, too, and of the boy. We must not let these memories haunt the mother and make the boy ashamed.'

'To go back,' she answered without heeding me, 'to stand on the stage at Drury Lane once more. Have they forgotten me already, do you think? The Orange Girls

will remember, I am sure, and the natives of St. Giles,' she laughed, 'I don't think they will bear malice.'

'You must not go back to Drury Lane, Jenny.'

'I can do better than Drury Lane, Will,' she said. 'I have but to consent and I shall be—a Countess. And oh! how proud will my children be of their mother, proud indeed of their mother. Oh! Will, to think how one's birth clings round and hampers us all our lives. I might be happy; I might make a good and faithful man happy; but the time would come when the children would grow up and would ask who and what was their mother and where she was born. Could I take them to the ruins of the Black Jack? Could I take them to the Tyburn Tree of Glory and tell them how their grandfather died?' Then she relapsed into silence and so remained for awhile.

She had none of the common accomplishments of women; she could not sew or embroider or make things as women used. She could do nothing; she could not cook or make cordials; she understood no household work of any kind: she could read, but she had read nothing beyond the plays in which she had acted; she knew no history or geography or politics; she knew nothing but what she had learned for her own purposes; the scaffolding, so to speak, on which the actor builds his playing; the art of fine dress; and how to wear it; the art of dancing with an admirable grace of manner and of carriage; the art of courtesy and graciousness, in which she was a Princess; the art of making herself even more beautiful than Nature intended; and the art of bringing all men to her feet. Before we had been a day at sea, the Captain was her servant to command; by the second day, the mate was her slave; by the third day the sailors worshipped her. She brought good luck to the ship; every sailor will tell you that passengers may, and often do, resemble Jonah, who was

pursued by a tempest; Jenny brought fair weather and a balmy breeze always from the right quarter.

She did not forget our fellow-passengers. When she heard that they were dying fast she would have gone below to visit them, but the Captain refused his leave; the noisome quarters where they herded together, day and night, were not a proper place for any decent woman to visit. Let her send down what she pleased, and they should have it. She sent down from our stores daily drams of cordial and of rum; if she did not save many lives she made death less terrible.

The voyage came to an end all too quickly. On a certain day at the beginning of April we put into port and presently landed on the shores of the New World. There are certain forms. The bodies of Jenny Halliday and Pamela St. Giles—I called the girl Pamela for obvious reasons—were duly delivered to the officer representing the Governor and as duly handed over to me as their master for five years. This proceeding was performed without Jenny's presence or knowledge. I then found a lodging not far from the Port and sought the merchants to whom I had letters of introduction and credit.

My tale draws to an end. Let it not grow tedious in its last pages. In one word, in a week or so after our landing we started on a short journey of thirty miles or so over a somewhat rough road. Our journey took us five hours. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived. First there was a large wooden house of two storeys painted white; in the front a long and deep veranda—meaning a place covered over and protected from the sun by the roof and hangings at the side and in the front. Before the house was a flower-garden; at the back was a kitchen garden and orchard; the house was well and solidly furnished; all round the house lay

fields of tobacco on which black people were working; on the steps of the veranda; in the garden; under the trees played in the warm sun the little naked negro children.

'Where are we?' asked Jenny, looking round her.

I assisted her to get out of the waggon—it was little better—in which we had made our journey.

I led her into the house. In the principal room there was a long table laid as if for dinner. At the head was an armchair carved, I should think, in the sixteenth century, or earlier; it was a kind of throne with a coat of arms carved, gilded, and coloured upon it; the shield of the late occupant of the estate, recently dead.

I led Jenny to the head of the table. I placed her in the throne.

'Madame,' I said, 'this house is yours; these gardens are yours; this estate is yours; and we, if you please, are your most humble servants to command.' So I bent one knee and kissed her hand.

'Your most humble, obedient and grateful servants,' said Alice, following my example.

So we all did homage, but our Queen and mistress hid her face in her handkerchief and for a while she could not speak.

Thus began our new life, in which we all vied with each other in making Jenny feel that she was our mistress. We called her Madame; we made way for her; we flew to obey her; the overseers were instructed to report to her, personally, as to the condition of the field and the conduct of the slaves—there were no white servants on the estate; the slaves themselves looked to Madame as their owner, their mistress, and their friend.

For a time Jenny's mind remained still with the events of the past: the thought of Lord Brockenhurst; of the danger and the horrors which she had escaped; indeed she

could never forget these things. Little by little, as I hoped, the sense of power and authority returned. She never asked how this lovely property came to her, or if it truly belonged to her; she began quietly, as she had done in the Assembly Rooms at Soho Square, to direct, administrate, and improve. She mitigated the floggings; she improved the slaves' rations; she gave them days of rejoicing; she made the poor ignorant blacks, who for the most part understand little but the whip and the stick and the cuff, feel that they were in kindly hands; their children rolled about at her feet taking their childish liberties; she learned the business of tobacco-growing in all the stages; she walked about the fields in the morning before the sun was high, and noted how the plants were looking and whether the weeds were kept down.

Our neighbours—we had neighbours in all directions at two or three miles' distance—for some time hesitated to call. Things were variously reported; that Madame had come out for the help of her cousin, a convict; that Madame had brought out a large fortune; that the cousin had certainly letters of credit for a very large amount; that Madame was herself a convict; that we were all convicts—political prisoners—sent out for some kind of treason—Jacobite conspirators; friends of the Young Pretender; there was no end to the rumours and reports which were spread abroad concerning us. Nor was it until Lord Brockenhurst himself came all the way from England to visit us and stay with us, as you shall hear, that the neighbours made up their minds that we could be visited. I believe people think that Colonial society is open to all comers without question—perhaps they think it is composed of convicts. On the other hand the Colonials are more careful than the English at home whom they admit into their houses on friendly or intimate terms.

Our method of life was simple and uniform. We assembled on the veranda at seven, when I read prayers and a chapter. This done we took breakfast, not the petty meal of thin bread and butter and tea which satisfies the man about town, but a plentiful repast with many dishes containing vegetables and fruits unknown in London. After breakfast came the duties of the day. My own part was the keeping of the accounts. I called myself the steward. Alice directed the household; Jack was butler in command over the negroes of the house; and Pamela St. Giles was in charge of the stillroom. Outside, the blacks were busy in the fields. At twelve a bell rang which brought them all back to camp, where they took their dinner. At half past twelve we dined. For our eating I declare that we had the choicest birds; the finest mutton; the best beef; the most excellent fish that you can imagine; all things cheap; all plentiful; and for drink our cellars were full of such Canary, Madeira and Port as few gentlemen could show at home. In the evening we had supper at six; after supper I read prayers and another chapter. Then we played cards; or we had in the violins; or Tom played on the harpsichord; or we sang glees and madrigals. And every night all to bed by nine.

On Sundays we had morning service, which I read. The overseers were present, and after the blacks grew to like the music they sat about the door while we chanted the Psalms and sang our Hymns. In the evening I read a sermon or a discourse on some godly subject.

At these religious exercises Madame would always be present; sitting in her carved armchair, her head resting on her hand, expressing in her face neither interest nor weariness. Remember that never had anyone taught her a word of religion. She looked on and listened; some-

times she did not listen; her eyes were fixed and far away; she was back on the stage of Drury Lane.

Who can tell how they all loved and worshipped her? Even the overseers, commonly the most brutal of men, some of whom pride themselves at being able to cut a lump of flesh from a negro's leg at a distance of ten feet and more, were softened by the gracious presence. The worst cruelties were abandoned on our estate; as for floggings; of course there must be floggings so long as there are slaves; and of course there must be slaves so long as there are negroes. The clergy of Virginia are united in this opinion; I wish they were also united in the opinion that even a slave should be protected by the law from inhuman treatment.

This our quiet mode of life was broken into one day when there appeared unexpectedly Lord Brockenhurst himself. It was about six months after our arrival. He dismounted; he threw his reins to his servant and mounted the steps of the veranda.

It was late in the afternoon—about six; the autumn sun was getting low; Jenny was sitting with Alice and Tom's wife talking of household affairs. She rose quietly with a pretty blush and stepped forward.

'Good Heavens, Jenny!' his Lordship cried, 'you are more beautiful than ever, I swear.'

'Welcome, my Lord, to Virginia. You are come, I trust, to accept the hospitality of this poor house?'

'Madame, you honour me. It is a lovely house with a view the most charming in the world. I knew not that Virginia was half so fine a country.'

'Indeed, if English people did know—they would all come over. I pray your Lordship not to speak too well of us. There are some people in the old country that we would not willingly welcome in the New.'

So she led him into the inner room and sent for Madeira to refresh him.

'Your Lordship has something to tell me,' she said, beginning to shiver and shake. 'You did not come all the way from England only to wish me Good-morning.'

'I bring you, Jenny, what I promised, your full pardon and release. It is in the hands of the Governor. You can return, now, whenever you please.'

'I was beginning to forget, my Lord, that I am but a prisoner still and a convict. These people with whom I live, the best people, I verily believe, in the whole world, have almost made me forget that fact. But I thank your Lordship all the same. I thank you most humbly and most gratefully. Except my Cousin Will—my husband's cousin—there is no more loyal and faithful gentleman than my Lord Brockenhurst.'

'I have done what I can. I could do no more.'

'My Lord, you have ridden thirty miles. You are tired? No? Then—let me ask you one more favour. Tell me about this matter to-morrow. Sleep first upon it,' for she saw his purpose in his eyes. 'Think, I pray you, partly of what I am and of what you are; partly of your own dignity; partly of how one such as I am should behave towards one such as you.'

She rose.

'I will now,' she said, 'if you are not tired, show you our gardens and our tobacco-fields.'

His Lordship took supper with us. I saw that he was pleased at the little state and ceremony with which we surrounded Jenny. I saw, as well, the love in his eyes, which he could not tear away from her face.

After supper, we had a little concert. Tom took the harpsichord, and I took the violin. First we played a piece, as a duet; then Tom played while Alice sang; then

we all, with Jack our Butler, who had an excellent bass, while Tom sang alto and I the tenor, sang four-part songs, and I saw how his Lordship watched the negroes sitting about outside and crowding up the doorway. I am sure he took home the belief that we were a happy household, blacks and all; and that Jenny was the mistress over all.

After breakfast in the morning Jenny bade Alice and me come with her while she received his Lordship.

She took her place at the window, sitting in her high chair. Lord Brockenhurst entered, bearing certain papers in his hand.

'My Lord,' she said, 'you can speak with perfect freedom. I entreat you to use perfect freedom before my cousins. I have no secrets from them; they can tell you perhaps more about myself than I ever will speak—for myself.'

Lord Brockenhurst coloured and was confused, but only for a little. 'Dear Madame,' he said, 'since you will not give an interview alone I must make the best of the presence of others.'

'They know everything,' said Madame.

He bowed. 'I have told you,' he said, 'that I have brought out and delivered over to the Governor your full pardon and release. These papers are a copy.'

Jenny pushed them aside. 'I do not want to see them,' she said, 'let me never be reminded of their existence. Take them, Will, and lock them up.'

I received them and placed them in my pocket.

'That done, Madame,' he went on, 'I have only to invite your remembrance of a certain proposal that—I believe you have not forgotten it. Since your worthy cousins know what that proposal was I have only to say that once more, most divine woman, I offer myself—my name and rank—my fortune and possessions—at your feet.' He fell on his knees and took her hand.

Jenny turned away her face. 'Answer him, Alice—tell him what I have so often told you. Rise, my Lord. Do not pain me by kneeling at my unworthy feet.'

'My Lord,' said Alice solemnly, 'there is no one in the world—believe me—whom Jenny regards with greater respect and gratitude than yourself.'

'Respect and gratitude are but cold words,' he said.

'Let me add with greater love. Your Lordship is the only man in the world whom she has ever loved or could love. That also, believe me, is most true.'

'Why, then——' He held out his hand.

'Nay, my Lord. Jenny loves you so well that nothing would induce her to accept the honour of your proposal.'

'How? Loves me so well?'

'Jenny bids me tell you that the time would come when your children would ask who was their mother, and who were her mother's friends. They would learn her history, I need not remind you of her history. You know it all. Jenny loves you too well to bring shame and discredit on a noble House. Your children, she says, must have a mother worthy of yourself.'

'There is no more worthy woman in the world than Jenny!'

'Their mother must have an unblemished name, my Lord, worthy of your own. She knows you to be so good and loyal that you could never reproach her with the past. But it belongs to her. And, my Lord, it must not belong to you.'

'It must not; it shall not,' Jenny repeated through her tears.

'Is this your answer, Jenny? Oh! Jenny, will you cast me off for such a scruple?'

'I must—I must. Go, my Lord. Think of me no more. Why'—she sprang to her feet—'what could I

expect? I—the Orange Girl—the daughter of the Black Jack—the friend of thieves; the Newgate Prisoner; the transported convict? A coronet? For me? the hand of a noble gentleman? the name of a noble house? For me? Fie upon you, my Lord, for thinking of such a thing! Remember what is due to a gentleman. And I thank you—oh! I thank you—you can never know how much—for thinking—you the only one—of nothing less or lower. Go, my Lord. Tempt me no more. I know what I must do. Farewell.'

He seized her in his arms; he kissed her—forehead and cheek and lips and hands. He ceased to urge his suit. He saw that she was fixed, and in his heart he knew that she was right. 'I obey,' he said. 'Oh! noblest of women, I obey.'

So he rushed away, and Jenny fell into Alice's arms.

I sit on my own estate in the pleasant land of Virginia; outside the veranda the hot sun ripens the corn and fruit: I did my duty in the great and glorious war which set our country free: my sons will do theirs if the occasion should again arise: we have taught our cousins across the seas that we can fight for freedom: but there will be no more fighting for that. It is won, once for all—I am now old, but as I sit alone, my eyes resting on as fair a landscape of river and forest and orchard and garden as the world can show, I suddenly wander away and gaze beyond the ocean, beyond the years, upon that abode of despair and wretchedness, where Jenny sits like a flower in a pig-sty, talking of what she should do when she came out of prison, but unable to read in the future any return to the world at all. As for fear or doubt, or any anxiety about the future, the poor soul had none. She was going to continue for ever beautiful, to win that worship of men which

she loved so much. I have now lost all the friends of my youth: they pass before me sometimes in a long procession. It is the consolation of age to live in the past: but in all the array of ghosts there is none that brings tears except the figure of Jenny in her wondrous beauty and her soft and lovely eyes.

She lived with us for more than thirty years. She grew gray—but she was as lovely in her age as in her youth. She was mistress unquestioned to the end and never more than in her old age. But always with the same kindness: the same grace: the same sweetness of look, and the same softness of eye.

She died at last of some fever caught of a young negress whom she visited in the infirmary. She was ill for three days only, and she died lying in the veranda, looking out upon the woods and mountains on the golden sunshine that she loved.

'Alice, dear,' she said, 'you have told me, often, that we are led, we know not how, to things that are best for us, though by ways that we would not choose. I have not forgotten what you said. I never forget, my dear, what you say.'

Alice kissed her fingers.

'I understand now what you mean. I have been led. I have been led—— My dear, I am going to die. Bury me as one of yourselves—not in a ditch like my own people—who, perhaps, are not led. Bury me in the burial-ground where your baby lies. Put no stone upon my grave, but plant white flowers over it. Let my abode, at least, look lovely after death. I have been led, Alice—I have been led—I understand it now.'

After a little: 'Alice, I have been proud of what men called my loveliness. It makes every woman happy when men call her lovely. My Lord called me lovely. Send

him, Alice, a lock of my hair. Tell him that I have never loved any other man.'

She died. We buried her in the little burial-ground where lay the child we lost. We put up no headstone, but we planted the grave with white flowers.

There is now another grave beside hers with more white flowers. It bears the name of Alice.

To me it has been given to love two women at the same time, and that with equal love and equal respect and without blame or sin.

THE END.

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